NATION

2 dead, 10 missing in Himachal floods

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BUSINESS

Defence start-up Raphe raises $100M in record deal

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SPORTS

ICC introduces stop clock in new WTC cycle

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PHOTO: X

Navy staffer held for leaking Op Sindoor info to Pak

JAIPUR, 26 JUNE

An Indian Navy staffer, Vishal Yadav, has been arrested in Jaipur for allegedly leaking sensitive defence information, including classified details of Operation Sindoor, to a Pakistani handler for monetary gain. Yadav, an Upper Division Clerk in Delhi, was approached on Facebook by a female operative disguised as "Priya Sharma." Following monitored communications via WhatsApp and Telegram, Yadav reportedly shared critical information for payments amounting to about Rs 2 lakh, including Rs 50,000 specifically for Operation Sindoor details. Police say he was lured by financial incentives and confirmed that his mobile phone contained incriminating evidence.—*PTI*

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2 women Naxals with ₹6L bounty killed in Ch'garh

NARAYANPUR, 26 JUNE

In a significant anti-Naxal operation, two women identified as Seema and Linge, both with a combined bounty of Rs 6 lakh, have been killed in a gunfight with security forces in Narayanpur district. The encounter occurred late on Wednesday in a forest area during a joint operation involving the District Reserve Guard and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, following intelligence reports concerning senior Maoist cadres. Police recovered the bodies along with an INSAS rifle, a country-made weapon, ammunition, explosives, and material related to Maoist ideology. Inspector General Sundarraj P confirmed the commitment of security forces to continue anti-Maoist operations.—*PTI*

Cyber criminals using 8.5L mule a/cs in 700 banks

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The CBI has detected 8.50 lakh mule bank accounts in over 700 branches nationwide, which are being used by cyber criminals to launder proceeds from scams involving digital theft, impersonation, fraudulent investments, and UPI-based frauds. The agency arrested nine persons for facilitating the opening of fictitious accounts for siphoning funds from unsuspecting victims. The agency uncovered systemic lapses with some banks neglecting to dispatch acknowledgement or confirmation letters. —*PTI*

11 feared dead as bus falls into river in Uttarakhand

RUDRAPRAYAG, 26 JUNE

At least three people were killed, eight injured and nine others reported missing on Thursday when a 31-seater bus carrying pilgrims from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra to Badrinath fell into the Alaknanda river here, police said. The vehicle met with the accident near the Gholtir village on the Badrinath National Highway between Rudraprayag and Gauchar, they said. Relief and rescue efforts, hampered by the strong currents of the river, are underway on the spot with the help of local villagers. —*PTI*

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India refuses to sign SCO pact over Pahalgam attack exclusion

The Communique drafted by China blames India for unrest in Balochistan

QINGDAO, 26 JUNE

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday refused to sign the joint communiqué at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' Conclave in Qingdao after the document failed to mention the recent Pahalgam terror attack or adequately address India's concerns on Pakistan-backed cross-border terrorism.

While skipping any mention of Pahalgam, the document mentioned Balochistan, tacitly accusing India of creating unrest there. Pahalgam's exclusion from the document appears to have been done at Pakistan's behest as its all-weather ally, China, holds the Chair now.

The SCO operates on consensus, and Singh's decision led to the conclave ending without a joint statement, sources said.

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun were among those who attended the conclave.

In his address, Singh strongly criticised Pakistan for using cross-border terrorism as a policy tool and called for SCO nations to adopt a unified, uncompromising stance. "Some countries provide shelter to terrorists. The SCO should not hesitate to criticise such nations," he asserted, urging members to end "double standards" on terrorism.

He reiterated India's zero tolerance towards terrorism, referencing Operation Sindoor, launched in response to the Pahalgam attack. "Victims were shot after being profiled on religious identity. The Resistance Front, a proxy of UN-designated Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), claimed responsibility," he said. The attack pattern, he added, resembled previous LeT operations.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting in Qingdao China on Thursday *PHOTO: PTI*

Singh underscored India's right to self-defence and pre-emptive action, saying terror epicentres "are no longer safe" from Indian retaliation. "Those who sponsor and utilise terrorism for selfish ends must bear the consequences," he warned.

He also urged the SCO to take proactive steps to prevent radicalisation of youth, noting India's efforts through the 2023 SCO joint statement on 'Countering Radicalisation'.

The defence minister warned of emerging threats including cyberattacks, hybrid warfare and transnational terrorism, stressing the need for a collective response based on transparency, mutual trust and cooperation.

Singh reaffirmed India's consistent support for peace and stability in Afghanistan and highlighted the importance of better connectivity with Central Asia to boost trade and build trust. However, he emphasised that all initiatives must respect the SCO Charter, especially the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states. —*PTI*

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K'TAKA SLASHES EXCISE LICENCE FEE HIKE BY 50%

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

The government on Thursday scaled back its proposed hike in excise licence renewal fees, opting for a 50 per cent increase instead of doubling the charges, following strong opposition from liquor sellers.

In a move welcomed by industry stakeholders, the government also extended the licence renewal period from one year to five years. The revised fees will take effect from 1 July.

After considering objections, the government issued a fresh order, settling on a 50 per cent hike.

The original draft notification, issued on 15 May, had proposed a 100 per cent hike across excise licence categories to bolster State revenue. —*PTI*

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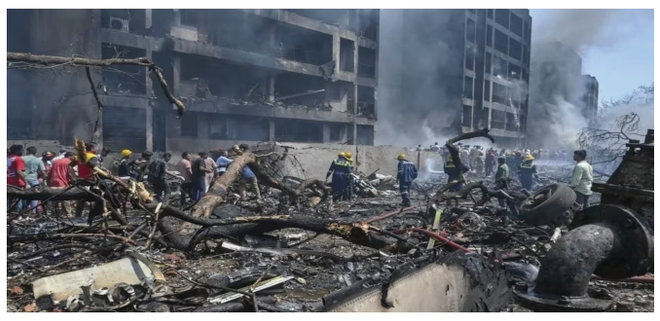

Data downloaded from AI plane's Black Box: Govt

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The government on Thursday said data from the Black Boxes recovered from the Air India plane crash site has been successfully downloaded and is being analysed.

The data analysis cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder is underway to reconstruct the sequence of events that led to the fatal crash in Ahmedabad on 12 June.

The Civil Aviation Ministry said the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) initiated an investigation and constituted a multi-disciplinary team headed by the AAIB chief, GVG Yugandhar on 13 June.

The team included an aviation medicine specialist, an Air Traffic Control (ATC) officer, and representatives from the US National Transportation Safety Board.

Opposition Congress on Thursday attacked the government over the lead investigator not being appointed for the probe, terming the delay as "inexplicable and inexcusable".

"On the evening of 24 June, the team led by AAIB DG with technical members from AAIB and NTSB began the data extraction process. ..... its data downloaded at the AAIB Lab," the ministry said.

The CVRs and FDRs of the two Black Boxes were recovered within a week after the accident. The devices were kept under surveillance in Ahmedabad and later flown to Delhi by an IAF aircraft. —*PTI*

IRAN DELIVERED SLAP TO US' FACE, SAYS KHAMENEI

DUBAI, 26 JUNE

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Thursday his country had delivered a "slap to America's face" with its strike on an American base in Qatar, and warned against any further US attacks in his first public comments since a ceasefire was declared with Israel after 12 days of war. "The Islamic Republic was victorious and, in retaliation, delivered a hand slap to America's face," he said, adding "this action can be repeated in the future.... Should any aggression occur, the enemy will definitely pay a heavy price," he said. —*PTI*

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GOVT ORDERS PROBE

Tigress and 4 cubs poisoned to death in MM Hills

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre has ordered a high-level probe into the suspected poisoning deaths of five tigers, a tigress and her four cubs, in the Hugyam range of the MM Hills Wildlife Sanctuary, about 110 km south of Bengaluru.

The carcasses were discovered on Wednesday morning. Preliminary suspicions point to poisoning. Khandre has directed the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) to lead the investigation, with a report due within three days.

He has instructed the Additional Chief Secretary and Chief Wildlife Warden to initiate criminal action against anyone found guilty — whether the cause is poisoning, electrocution, or negligence.

Wildlife conservationist Joseph Hoover criticised the government, blaming political interference for the sanctuary not being upgraded to a tiger reserve. The National Tiger Conservation Authority had earlier recommended MM Hills as Karnataka's sixth tiger reserve, but the proposal was blocked for alleged vote-bank politics.

Hoover also accused Bandipur Tiger Reserve's field director of threatening him for exposing mismanagement. With 563 tigers, the state ranks second in India. —*Salar News*

Durga temple razed in B'desh, India says protect Hindus

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

India on Thursday strongly condemned the demolition of a Durga temple in Dhaka and urged Bangladesh's interim government to uphold its responsibility to protect Hindus and religious institutions.

The Khilkhet Sarbajanin Durga Mandir was reportedly demolished following an order issued by Bangladesh Railway's Dhaka Division Deputy Commissioner Md. Nasir Uddin Mahmud, two days after a mob threatened to destroy it.

e"We understand that extremists were clamouring for demolishing the temple... the interim government, instead of ensuring its protection, allowed its destruction under the pretext of illegal land use," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal he said.

He noted that damage was caused to the deity during the demolition.

On broader bilateral ties, Jaiswal said India is open to engagement on all matters, including the upcoming Ganges water treaty renewal, in a conducive environment.

India to better ties with Canada

Days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Canada, India on Thursday said it is looking at strengthening the bilateral partnership with Ottawa in several areas including trade and energy. —*PTI*

AXIOM-4 DOCKS

Shubhanshu becomes 1st Indian astronaut on ISS

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

IAF test pilot Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla on Thursday became the first Indian to set foot on the International Space Station as he and three other astronauts entered the orbital laboratory to warm hugs and handshakes after the docking of their Dragon spacecraft named Grace at the end of a 28-hour journey around the earth.

Scripting history with this feat, Shukla, 39, became the 634th astronaut to travel to space with the Indian Air Force's fighter pilot ending his brief remarks after entering the ISS with a "Jai Hind Jai Bharat" message. He is also the second Indian to go to space in 41 years and the first since Rakesh Sharma's eight-day sojourn in 1984.

"With your love and blessings, I have reached the International Space Station. It looks easy to stand here, but my head is a little heavy, facing some difficulty; but these are minor issues," he said in brief remarks in Hindi at the formal welcome ceremony at the ISS.

"We will get used to it. This is the first step of this journey."

The docking occurred at 4.01 pm IST over the North Atlantic Ocean, achieving a soft capture with the ISS's Harmony module. Communication, power link establishment, and pressure stabilisation took an additional two hours. NASA confirmed the docking sequence was fully completed by 4.15 pm IST. The #Ax4 crew comprises mission commander Peggy Whitson, ISRO astronaut Shubanshu Shukla, European Space Agency astronaut Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski, and Hungarian mission specialist Tibor Kapu.

Launched from Florida at 12:01 pm IST on Wednesday, Grace, the fifth spacecraft in the Dragon series, manoeuvred skilfully using thrusters and advanced laser sensors. It bypassed planned stops at "waypoint-1" and "waypoint-2", bringing forward docking by nearly 30 minutes.

Hard-mating was completed with 12 hooks securing the two spacecrafts. Leak checks and pressure equalisation procedures followed before hatch opening. Veteran astronaut Whitson floated into the station at 5:53 pm IST, followed by Shukla, Uznanski, and Kapu. Uznanski becomes the second Polish astronaut in space, while Kapu is the second Hungarian to make the journey. The ISS now hosts 11 astronauts, including members from NASA, JAXA, and Russia's Roscosmos. —*PTI*

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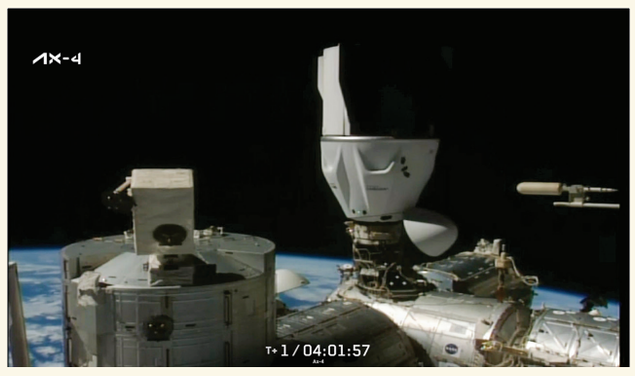


India's Shubhanshu Shukla, along with three other astronauts, joined the International Space Station crew after the Axiom-4 mission's SpaceX Dragon spacecraft docked *PHOTO: PTI*

IN 2025, 3,500 MILLIONAIRES TO LEAVE INDIA

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

As many as 3,500 Indian millionaires are projected to leave India to settle abroad in 2025, marking a decline from 5,100 in 2023 and 4,300 in 2024 as stated by Henley Private Wealth Migration Report 2025,. However, the report notes that the overall trend for millionaires seeking to relocate internationally remains upward.

According to Henley & Partners estimates, the combined wealth of migrating millionaires from India will reach $26.2 billion. From 2014 to 2024, the number of millionaires in India surged by 72 per cent, highlighting the country's growing affluence.

On a broader scale, an unprecedented 1,42,000 millionaires are expected to relocate globally in 2025, with the UK facing a staggering outflow of 16,500 high-net-worth individuals, more than double that of China.

France, Spain, and Germany are also predicted to experience millionaire net losses for the first time in 2025. —*Agencies*

Actor Prakash Raj, along with others, arrived at Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's residence in Bengaluru on Thursday to discuss the land acquisition in Channarayapatna near Devanahalli and the police action against farmers during the protest ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Parameshwara asks students to give up drugs

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Thursday urged students not to ruin their lives by getting addicted to drugs, as they have a bright future ahead. He was speaking after inaugurating an International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking event organised by the Bengaluru City Police at the Kanteerava Stadium here. Over the past year, narcotics worth Rs 45 crore, including 4,000kg of marijuana, have been seized, the minister said. Noting the involvement of foreign students in the drug trade, he said that more than 200 foreign nationals have been deported. Parameshwara stated that there is a global movement against drug and human trafficking, and efforts are on to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse. People need to understand both the physical and psychological harms caused by drugs, he said. The minister said tough action is being taken to bust drug rackets, but law enforcement alone is not enough —*PTI*

Mysuru's Rangayana to host theatre festival

MYSURU, 26 JUNE

To commemorate senior theatre activist CG Krishnaswamy, also popular as CGK in theatre circles, Mysuru-based theatre repertory Rangayana will host a theatre festival from 29 June till 10 August at its premises, said the institution's director Satish Tiptur on Thursday. During the festival, seven plays will be staged every weekend by various theatre troupes. The festival will be inaugurated by noted theatre personality H Janardhan on 29 June at 6pm. On that day, Nepathya Theatre will stage Kuvempu's 'Smashana Kurukshetra'. On 6 July, GPIER Troupe will stage 'Ward Number 6'. Mysuru Theatre will perform on 13 July a street play on 'Ahalya'. Rangavalli Theatre will stage 'Parameshi Prema Prasangha' on 20 July, while Abhiyanthararu Theatre will perform 'Kalasutra' on 27 July. On 2 August, Karnataka Sangha Theatre will a play on 'Nitya Sachiva'. On the final day, 10 August, Kerala-based Little Earth School of Theatre will stage 'Kuhu'. All plays will be staged at Bhoomigeetha auditorium on Rangayana premises at 6.30 pm —*Salar News*

K'taka cuts proposed excise licence fee by 50%

Licence renewal extended by 5yrs; New fee from 1 July

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

The government on Thursday scaled back its proposed hike in excise licence renewal fees, opting for a 50 per cent increase instead of doubling the charges, following strong opposition from liquor sellers.

In a move welcomed by industry stakeholders, the government also extended the licence renewal period from one year to five years. The revised fees will take effect from 1 July.

After considering objections, the government issued a fresh order, settling on a 50 per cent hike.

The original draft notification, issued on 15 May, had proposed a 100 per cent hike across excise licence categories to bolster state revenue. However, representatives from the Karnataka Liquor Sellers' Association and others met Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to urge a more moderate increase of 20–25 per cent.

This is the first fee hike since 2016, with previous proposals stalled due to consistent industry pushback. The revised structure is expected to generate an additional Rs 300 crore in annual revenue.

B. Govindaraja Hegde, General Secretary of the Karnataka Liquor Sellers' Association, welcomed the move, particularly the extension of licence validity. He added that the association has requested the option to pay fees in instalments, to which the government may respond favourably.13,000 licence holders will renew at the updated rates as the new excise year begins on 1 July. —*PTI*

THE NEW ANNUAL RENEWAL FEES ARE BASED ON THE POPULATION

- Rs 9 lakh for metropolitan corporations with populations over 20 lakh
- Rs 7.5 lakh for other metropolitan areas
- Rs 6.75 lakh for municipal corporations.
- Rs 6 lakh for towns, municipalities, and town panchayats
- Fees for other regions will vary depending on population

In addition to retail licence revisions, the government has also raised fees for various excise categories

- Distillery & brewery: Rs 1.5 lakh
- Craft brewery: Rs 25,000
- Fortified wine production: Rs 25,000
- Distillery & warehouse: Rs 67 lakh
- Bar charter at international airports: Rs 18.75 lakh

CONG VS CONG

DKS rejects talks of CM losing control over admin

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivkumar on Thursday rejected talks about CM Siddaramaiah losing control over the administration, amid disgruntlement within the ruling Congress in the state, with some party MLAs openly speaking against their own government's functioning.

He blamed the media for "blowing up" the issue. "I don't know about it. I have not heard about it. Whatever is there, my party's High Command leaders will come. I'm also speaking to all of them. There is nothing in that. There is nothing to blow up (the issue)," Shivakumar said, when asked about several MLAs speaking openly against Siddaramaiah and the government.

Congress' Aland MLA BR Patil has alleged bribery in the allotment of public housing under the Housing department. MLA Raju Kage, who represents the Kagwad assembly segment, has hinted at resigning, citing delays in developmental works and the release of funds, while alleging that the administration had "completely collapsed".

Hemavathi canal meet postponed

Shivakumar announced that the Hemavathi link canal meeting, initially set for 30 June, has been postponed to 4 to 5 July following a request from Union Minister V Somanna. The Yettinahole contractors' meeting in Tumakuru was also deferred due to Home Minister Parameshwar's absence and will now be held in Bengaluru. Shivakumar, reviewing the project's progress, said efforts are underway to address water storage issues in Koratagere. —PTI

Perform or be replaced: CM warns AAGs

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday issued a strong directive to the State's Additional Advocate Generals (AAGs), urging them to perform effectively or face replacement. The warning came during a review meeting at Vidhana Soudha to assess the AAGs' performance in representing the government in courts.

To strengthen legal representation, the number of AAGs has been increased. He reminded them that upholding and defending Karnataka's laws is their key responsibility, and negligence would not be tolerated.

He expressed concern over setbacks in several cases due to poor courtroom arguments, questioning why favourable verdicts are lacking even in meritorious cases. He also highlighted the growing number of injunctions against the government, many of which remain unvacated for years. Swift legal action was urged to resolve such issues.

Siddaramaiah warned that even small lapses were leading to embarrassment for the government. "Perform effectively or be replaced — this is non-negotiable," he said.

He directed AAGs to come fully prepared to court, approach every case with diligence, and escalate non-cooperation by departments to the Chief Secretary. Each AAG will now be assigned department-specific responsibilities.

Of 21,799 government cases pending in the High Court, no action has been taken in 5,016. Immediate resolution is required.

The meeting was attended by Law Minister H.K. Patil, Advocate General Shashikiran Shetty, and other top officials —*PTI*

TEACHERS' SHORTAGE

Volunteers performed a skit on the 60th Foundation Day of the All India Democratic Youth Organisation at Freedom Park in Bengaluru. They demanded that the government fill the vacant positions for teachers in primary and high schools on Thursday ***PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD***

Rajanna hints at changes in Cong post-September

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Minister for Cooperation KN Rajanna on Thursday said there are too many power centres in the ruling Congress in the State, as he also indicated that there will be political developments after September.

These comments are seen with significance amid speculation about a cabinet reshuffle and leadership change in the State later this year. "Let September be over...there will be developments in State politics," Rajanna said.

When asked what kind of political developments can be expected after September, Rajanna said, "Haven't you heard of August and May revolution? Similarly this too is a revolution....if we say details now itself, you will lose interest."

Asked about the opinion among some legislators that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah today is not the same as he was in his first stint as CM, and whether there is pressure on him, Rajanna said there are too many power centres in Congress now.

"You may say that you can't see Siddaramaiah of 2013–18 and that is more or less the opinion of the people too... During 2013–18 there was only one power centre. Now there are many. When there are many power centres, there will be more hustle and bustle...he (Siddaramaiah) will also have to manage the government and party according to the situation," said Rajanna, who is considered close to Siddaramaiah.

Meanwhile, asked about any big development in State politics or at the government level by the end of this year, PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi said, "I don't see big changes, but there may be changes," he said. —*PTI*

FIR against BJP over post comparing Indira to Hitler

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

An FIR has been filed against the Karnataka BJP's official social media handle over a controversial post comparing former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to Adolf Hitler, police confirmed on Thursday.

The action follows a complaint lodged by Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) general secretary S Manohar at the High Grounds police station on 25 June. According to the complaint, the BJP's official X account (@BJP4Karnataka) shared a post at 3.54pm on Wednesday, captioned: "INDIRA NOT EQUALS INDIA, INDIRA = HITLER". The post included a 38-second video on the Emergency period and featured a graphic where Indira Gandhi's image was altered to resemble Hitler. The post was later deleted.

Manohar alleged the content was defamatory and intended to incite social unrest and promote enmity between communities. He claimed it disrespected the legacy of the former Prime Minister, especially on the anniversary of the Emergency declaration.

A now-deleted post by the BJP on X read, "INDIRA ≠ INDIA, INDIRA = HITLER," and featured a 38-second video depicting former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi with a Hitler-like moustache ***PHOTO: SCREENGRAB***

Police have registered a case under Sections 192 (deliberate provocation with intent to cause riot) and 353 (statements leading to public mischief) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. A senior officer confirmed that further investigation is underway. The Congress has condemned the post, while the BJP is yet to respond officially. —*PTI*

Vijayendra rules out State BJP leadership change

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

BJP Karnataka president BY Vijayendra on Thursday expressed confidence about continuing in his current role, as the party gears up to appoint new office-bearers at both state and national levels.

Speculation is rife that Karnataka BJP unit may see a change in leadership, with signs of internal discontent emerging within party ranks.

Vijayendra said he delivered his responsibilities effectively during his one-and-half-year tenure as the party's State chief, and his work is well recognised by party leaders and workers.

"The BJP is a national party. Everyone's opinion has been sought. I have done my job successfully over the past one-and-a-half years, and my leaders and fellow karyakartas are aware of it," he said, in response to a question about whether he would continue in the role.

Asked about his recent Delhi visit, the Shikaripura MLA clarified that it was a personal trip.

- BJP Karnataka president BY Vijayendra on Thursday expressed confidence about continuing in his current role, as the party gears up to appoint new office-bearers at both state and national levels.Speculation is rife that Karnataka BJP unit may see a change in leadership, with signs of internal discontent emerging within party ranks.

On the presence of other senior BJP leaders – including Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka – in the national capital, he said there was no need for speculation.

"I had gone to Delhi and so had some other senior leaders. They are yet to return. But speculating that a major development is underway is baseless. I didn't meet anyone there; my personal work is done," he stated.

To a question about rumours of a change in the LoP post, Vijayendra defended Ashoka, saying he enjoys the confidence of party MLAs. "It's not proper for the media to speculate on his removal. There is no truth to it," he said. —*PTI*

'B'LURU VERY ALLURING'

Apex court refuses doc's plea against transfer

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Thursday called Bengaluru's cosmopolitan life "very alluring" as it refused to examine a plea by government doctors against their transfers out of the City.

A bench of Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and K Vinod Chandran noted no prejudice if the doctors were transferred out of Bengaluru.

"The cosmopolitan life of Bengaluru is very alluring. The others areas of Karnataka are also developed. You are a privileged class of society. If you will oppose transfer what will happen to others. We are not inclined to entertain the appeal," the bench said.

The top court was hearing a plea filed by a group of doctors challenging the Karnataka State Civil Services (Regulation of Transfer of Medical Officers and other Staff) Rules, 2025 which regulates the transfer of medical officers and other staff within the state's health and family welfare department.

The Karnataka High Court had previously refused to stay the rules, saying the 2025 rules were enacted in exercise of state's power under Section 12 of Karnataka State Civil Services (Regulation of Transfer of Medical Officers and other Staff) 2011 Act, which would not specify any time between the publication of draft and finalisation of draft rules.

The petitioners questioned the rules, citing only a week's time to file objections to the draft rules.

The draft rules had no concept of Greater Bengaluru and its incorporation in the final notification was impermissible. —*PTI*

SC to hear on rights of accused

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Thursday agreed to hear a plea by the Karnataka Police challenging a High Court order that rejected the custody remand of a murder accused on the grounds that he was not informed of the reasons for his arrest.

A bench of Justices KV Viswanathan and N Kotiswar Singh said the matter "requires consideration" and issued notice to the accused, who was arrested on 17 February, 2023 in Hassan district.

The High Court, in its 17 April, 2024 order, had quashed the remand issued by the trial court and ordered the man's release, stating that he had not been informed of any "worthwhile particulars" regarding his arrest, nor was there written communication of the grounds, as required under evolving legal standards.

Senior advocate Sidharth Luthra, appearing for the police, argued that the High Court's ruling could become a precedent affecting several pending cases.

The apex court noted that a related petition—regarding whether the grounds of arrest must be furnished in every case—had its judgment reserved on 22 April. "The outcome of that verdict will impact this matter," the bench said, listing the case for further hearing on 18 July.

The case raises questions on procedural compliance under Section 50 of CrPC. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

China unveils 1.3cm mosquito drones

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

China has unveiled a miniature mosquito drone. According to report by The Sun, the tiny device has two yellow, leaf-like wings, a slim black body, and three thin legs. Built by researchers at the National University of Defence Technology (NUDT) in China's Hunan province, the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) is reportedly 1.3cm A video released by state media over the weekend shows scientists presenting the insect-shaped robot, which they say is designed for a mix of "military and civilian activities". The micro-drone is reportedly designed for discrete operations in complex or high-risk environments, offering an advanced method for intelligence gathering, reconnaissance, and special operations. ***—Agencies***

275 more Indians evacuated from Iran: Op Sindhu

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

In a critical operation, India successfully evacuated 272 Indian nationals and three Nepalese individuals from Iran as tensions escalate due to conflict with Israel. The evacuation was facilitated by a special flight that landed in New Delhi just after midnight, as part of Operation Sindhu. External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed the figures in an update on social media, revealing that 3,426 Indian citizens have been repatriated from Iran since the operation's commencement. Earlier in the week, India brought back over 1,100 individuals stranded due to the conflict, utilising both chartered flights and military aircraft. In addition to evacuating citizens from Iran, India has also repatriated nationals from Israel, employing C-17 heavy-lift aircraft for the task.***—PTI***

Drugs case: SAD leader remanded to 7-day custody

CHANDIGARH, 26 JUNE

Senior Shiromani Akali Dal leader Bikram Singh Majithia was remanded tu seven-day custody by a Mohali court following his arrest by the Punjab Vigilance Bureau on charges of laundering over Rs 540 crore in alleged drug money. The arrest came after a raid at his Amritsar residence, during which Majithia allegedly threatened officials. The bureau, citing findings from a Special Investigation Team, claims Majithia facilitated laundering via shell companies, foreign channels, and unexplained cash flows. Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said that no one—regardless of political clout—will be spared in the fight against drugs. ***—PTI***

BJP MLA says people owe their chappals to Modi

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 26 JUNE

Maharashtra BJP MLA Babanrao Lonikar has drawn sharp criticism for claiming that people who criticise the BJP owe their clothes, shoes, mobile phones, and welfare benefits to the party. Speaking at a 'Har Ghar Solar' event in Partur, Jalna district, Lonikar suggested that even salaries, pensions, and agricultural aid were possible only because of BJP-led schemes. In a viral video, he is heard saying, "Your mothers' salaries, your fathers' pensions, Rs 6,000 for sowing from Modi, and your sisters' Ladki Bahin Yojana benefits – all are because of us." Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis called the remarks "absolutely wrong". Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Ambadas Danve likened Lonikar to a "desi version of the British", reminding him that his privileges as an MLA come from the people. ***—PTI***

Navy staffer held for leaking intel to Pak

He was posted in Delhi HQs and allegedly gave info on Op Sindoor; Paid total of 2 lakh

JAIPUR, 26 JUNE

An Indian Navy staffer posted in naval headquarters in Delhi was arrested in Jaipur for allegedly leaking defence-related sensitive information to a Pakistani handler in exchange for money, a police official said Thursday.

Vishal Yadav, an Upper Division Clerk (UDC) in the Directorate of Dockyard at the Navy building, allegedly also shared details on Operation Sindoor.

Inspector General of Police (CID-Security) Vishnu Kant Gupta said Yadav, originally from Rewari in Haryana, leaked the classified information to a female Pakistani handler posing as an Indian woman.

He was arrested on Wednesday in Jaipur and will be subjected to a joint probe by multiple agencies.

"Yadav confessed to receiving approximately Rs 2 lakh in total for the information he passed on," Gupta said.

"This included Rs 50,000 for leaking information related to Operation Sindoor," the IGP said, adding some of the payments were also made in cryptocurrency.

Vishal Yadav ***PHOTO: X***

Intelligence sources revealed that Yadav was first approached on Facebook. The Pakistani handler sent a friend request under the fake identity "Priya Sharma".

Police said that Yadav initially received small payments of Rs 5,000-Rs 6,000 for lower-grade information. However, the handler allegedly encouraged him to provide more valuable intelligence in exchange for higher compensation. That's when Yadav began sharing critical defence-related data.

Special public prosecutor Sudesh Kumar Satwan revealed that intelligence agencies caught hold of Yadav while they were investigating an old case, when a lead led them to him.

Yadav, originally from Punsika village in Haryana, is also reported to be addicted to online gaming, which authorities believe may have made him more vulnerable to such traps.

Police said the forensic examination of Yadav's mobile phone reportedly uncovered extensive evidence, including financial transactions, sensitive messages, and confidential defence data exchanged with the handler.

He has been sent to police remand till 30 June. *—PTI*

One JeM terrorist killed in J&K

JAMMU, 26 JUNE

One terrorist of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) outfit was killed in an encounter with security forces on Thursday, while three of his associates remained trapped in a forested area in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district, officials said.

The group of four terrorists was being tracked for a year. They were confronted by a joint search party of the army and police in the remote Bihali area of Basantgarh in the morning, they said. According to officials, reinforcements were rushed in. A massive search operation is underway despite bad weather conditions.

"Operation continues," a defence spokesperson said. 'Operation Bihali' comes ahead of the start of the Amarnath Yatra. *—PTI*

B'desh dismisses alliance buzz with China and Pak

DHAKA, 26 JUNE

Bangladesh interim government of Muhammad Yunus on Thursday dismissed the idea of any emerging alliance between Dhaka, Beijing and Islamabad, saying the recent meeting between the three countries was not "political".

"We are not forming any alliance," Foreign Affairs adviser M Touhid Hossain told reporters at the foreign ministry, when asked for comments about the trilateral meeting in China's Kunming on 19 June.

"It was a meeting at the official level, not at the political level," Hossain said.

Asked if the meeting was intended to sideline India, Hossain asserted, "It is certainly not (about) targeting a third-party, I can assure you."

The foreign ministry had earlier said representatives from Bangladesh, China and Pakistan held an "informal trilateral meeting".

China had said the three countries held "extensive discussions on trilateral cooperation"

Islamabad on the other described the gathering as the "inaugural meeting of the Bangladesh-China-Pakistan trilateral mechanism" while both the countries said the meeting decided to form a "joint working group". *—PTI*

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh presented Russian Defence Minister Andrey Belousov a Nataraja statue ***PHOTO: X @RAJNATHSINGH***

Rajnath holds talks with Russian counterpart at SCO

QINGDAO, 26 JUNE

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh met Russian Defence Minister Andrey Belousov on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao, China.

The meeting came shortly after Singh arrived at the venue on Thursday, where he was received by Chinese Defence Minister Admiral Dong Jun.

"We had insightful deliberations on boosting India-Russia defence ties," Singh said on X.

Singh also met the Defence Ministers of Tajikistan and Belarus.

The SCO is an intergovernmental organisation established in 2001. India became a full member in 2017 and held the rotating chairmanship in 2023. Member countries include India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Belarus. *—PTI*

'NO ISSUE WITH ANY LANGUAGE'

Hindi is all Indian languages' friend: Shah

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Union Home minister Amit Shah on Thursday said Hindi is not an opponent to any Indian language, rather it is a friend of all Indian languages, and there should be no opposition to any foreign language in the country.

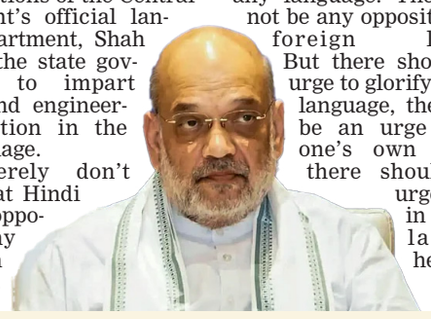
Addressing the golden jubilee celebrations of the Central government's official language department, Shah asked all the state governments to impart medical and engineering education in the local language.

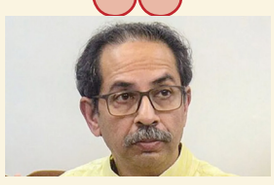
"I sincerely don't believe that Hindi can be an opponent to any Indian language. Hindi is a friend of all Indian languages," he said.

Hindi and other Indian languages together can take the country's self-esteem to the highest level, Shah said.

He said until a person takes pride in their own language, that person cannot be free from the mentality of slavery.

"There is no opposition to any language. There should not be any opposition to any foreign language. But there should be an urge to glorify one's own language, there should be an urge to speak one's own language, there should be an urge to think in one's own language," he said. *—PTI*





We don't oppose or hate any language, but that doesn't mean we will allow imposition of any language. We oppose the imposition of Hindi and it will continue

-Uddhav Thackeray, Shiv Sena (UBT) Chief

Hindi should not be made compulsory in primary education. There is no objection to Hindi being introduced after Class 5.... There is no reason to ignore the language completely

-Sharad Pawar, NCP (SP) supremo

Cong whip asks Tharoor to be wary of hawks

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

- Congress leader Manickam Tagore said 'even a free bird must watch the skies', in response to Tharoor likening himself to a free bird

A "war of birds" has erupted within the Congress party, with leaders exchanging veiled messages on social media. The controversy began when Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge criticised MP Shashi Tharoor for praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, suggesting some prioritise "Modi first, country later". Tharoor responded with a cryptic post featuring a bird and the caption, "Don't ask permission to fly. The wings are yours."

Congress whip Manickam Tagore shot back, saying, "Even a free bird must watch the skies... hawks, vultures, and eagles are always hunting."

"Freedom isn't free, especially when the predators wear patriotism as feathers," Tagore said.

The exchange highlights the ongoing rift between Tharoor and the Congress leadership. Tharoor's comments on Operation Sindoor and Pakistan have drawn attention, with some viewing them as diverging from the party's stance. Kharge distanced himself from Tharoor's views, emphasising the party's "country first" mantra.

The party's dynamics are under scrutiny, with Tharoor's future within the party uncertain. *—PTI*

Gujarat AAP MLA suspended after resigning

AHMEDABAD, 26 JUNE

The Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday suspended its MLA Umesh Makwana for "anti-party" activities, hours after he resigned from all the party posts, except as legislator, claiming the AAP has failed to raise issues of the backward classes.

Makwana, who represents Botad seat, announced in Gandhinagar that he has resigned as the party's national secretary and whip in the state assembly.

Soon after his move, Gujarat AAP president Isudan Gadhvi issued a statement announcing Makwana's suspension.

Makwana, who belongs to the Koli (Other Backward Class) community, had alleged that all parties, be it the BJP, Congress or AAP, always ignore backward classes when it comes to offering them key posts such as chief minister or party president in a press conference.

Makwana also accused the AAP's national and local leadership of being biased against the party's Dalit candidate in Kadi seat, Jagdish Chavda, who lost the election. *—PTI*

UN: India calls out Pak on child abuse and terror

UNITED NATIONS, 26 JUNE

India strongly rejected Pakistan's "unwarranted aspersions" over UN processes and attempts to deflect attention from atrocities committed against children in the country and rampant cross-border terrorism. India asserted that the world has not forgotten the Pahalgam attacks.

In a statement at the UN Security Council open debate on 'Effective strategies to end and prevent grave violations against children' Wednesday, India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador P Harish said.

said that Pakistan is casting unwarranted aspersions over UN processes, despite being a serious offender in crimes against children.

"We reject this attempt by Pakistan to deflect attention from the atrocities committed against children in their country, as well as their rampant cross border terrorism," Harish said.

Harish said that UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' report on CAAC provides details of serious violations against children in armed conflict in Pakistan.

Guterres had "expressed concern at the rise in violations reported including attacks against schools, particularly girls' schools, against health workers, and about the incidents in the border areas with Afghanistan where a series of killing and maiming of Afghan children was directly attributed to.... Pakistani armed forces!"

"To preach at this body after such behaviour is grossly hypocritical," Harish said.

"It is high time that Member States shed their political inhibitions to hold both terrorist perpetrators and their state sponsors accountable," he added. *—PTI*

Pakistan's Army Chief and Field Marshal Asim Munir attended the funeral of Moiz Abbas Shah, who had claimed to capture India Air Force Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman in the aftermath of Balakot airstrikes by India in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) in 2019 ***PHOTO:X***

18 TOP STATES

States to spend Rs 1 lakh cr on pre-poll sops to women: Report

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

The top 18 states will spend Rs 1 lakh crore on pre-poll sops to women this fiscal, Crisil Ratings said on Thursday. States' spending on social sector schemes will be at an elevated 2 per cent of Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in FY26 and is likely to impact capital expenditure, it added.

The social sector spends used to be in the range of 1.4-1.6 per cent of GSDP between fiscals 2019 and 2024, and climbed up to 2 per cent last fiscal, the rating agency said.

"This fiscal (FY26), the elevated spending will result in high revenue deficit, thereby limiting the flexibility of the states to undertake higher capital outlays," the agency said.

The analysis includes 18 top states accounting for over 90 per cent of aggregate GSDP of all states. It added that social sector spends includes revenue expenditure for welfare of backward classes, women, children and labour, as well as assistance to certain demographics in the form of social security pensions.

Its senior director Anuj Sethi said the overall expenditure across states will come at Rs 2.3 lakh crore, and of this, Rs 1 lakh crore is towards direct benefit transfers (DBT) to women primarily as "election commitments".

"Over the past few years, several key states that have gone to the polls have introduced or increased allocations to DBT schemes. With upcoming elections in...(some) states, a rise in DBT, as part of election commitments, is possible and remains a key monitorable," it said.

The agency said the increase in social welfare expenses over FY25 and FY26 is not estimated to be uniform across the states, with half of the analysed states expected to see a significant surge in these expenses, while the remaining are likely to see these spending at relatively stable levels or see a modest increase. *—PTI*

Several states have been increasing their DBT schemes ***PHOTO: X***

- The overall expenditure across states will come at Rs 2.3 lakh crore, and of this, Rs 1 lakh crore is towards direct benefit transfers (DBT) to women primarily as "election commitments"

Singhvi, Ranaut say NYC's Mamdani has 'Pak links'

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Congress MP Abhishek Manu Singhvi and BJP MP Kangana Ranaut have sparked controversy after targeting Zohran Mamdani, the Indian-origin Democrat who recently won the New York City mayoral primary. Singhvi posted on X, "When Zohran Mamdani opens his mouth, Pakistan's PR team takes the day off. India doesn't need enemies with 'allies' like him shouting fiction from New York."

Ranaut echoed the sentiment, stating, "He sounds more Pakistani than Indian... Whatever happened to his Hindu identity or bloodline? Now he's ready to wipe out Hinduism. Wow!" She also noted that his mother, filmmaker Mira Nair, was born and raised in India and awarded the Padma Shri.

Mamdani, son of Nair and Ugandan academic Mahmood Mamdani, defeated former governor Andrew Cuomo in a surprising primary victory. Known for his progressive views, Mamdani has voiced strong criticism of India's policies on Kashmir and Palestine—positions that have drawn sharp rebukes from Indian politicians.

The comments underscore growing tensions between India's political establishment and the global diaspora, especially when diaspora figures express dissenting views on Indian domestic affairs. *—PTI*

2 dead, 10 missing in Himachal floods

15–20 hydro project workers swept away in Khaniyara of Kangra district

SHIMLA, 26 JUNE

Search operations have been intensified to trace 10 people missing since the flash floods triggered by cloudbursts in Himachal's Kangra and Kullu districts.

In Kangra district, around 15-20 workers stationed at a labour colony near the Indira Priyadarshini Hydroelectric project site were feared swept away following a surge in water level in Manuni Khad in Khaniyara village on 25 June. Two people died at the site.

Six of them are missing, while the others were rescued. Search is on for a person who fled to a nearby hill to save himself.

Some of the missing people hail from Himachal Pradesh's Nurpur and Chamba and others from Uttar Pradesh.

BJP national president J P Nadda expressed condolences to the bereaved families of the workers who had been swept away.

Dharamshala BJP MLA Sudhir Sharma who reached the spot on Thursday said that building sheds for labourers near the drain, and not shifting them during bad weather to safe areas amounted to negligence and an investigation should be initiated.

Raising concerns about the negligence of the contractor and the project officials, he demanded adequate compensation for the family of the deceased. Around 250-275 workers employed at the site were shifted to Ambedkar Bhawan in Khaniyara.

In Kullu district, a search is underway to find three people, who were swept away while trying to retrieve valuables from their homes in the Rehla Bihal area of Sainj.

Manali and Banjar witnessed floods, while rains caused massive damage in Sainj, Gadsa and Hornagad areas in Kullu. —*PTI*

People stand near a damaged area at Sainj valley amid flash floods following cloudbursts, in Kullu district, Himachal Pradesh **PHOTO: PTI**

3 drown, 4 rescued as flash floods hit Jammu

JAMMU/ KATRA/T'PURAM, 26 JUNE

Three persons, including two children, died while four others were rescued as flash floods triggered by cloudbursts and heavy rains occurred in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri, Poonch, Doda and Kathua districts on Thursday.

Shaqafat Ali, 14 and his cousin, Safeena Kousar, 11, drowned in a riverlet at their Sialsui Mou village of Rajouri. Saima, 10 was rescued and shifted to a hospital.

The children were grazing their cattle when they were swept away by the flash floods due to a cloudburst.

The body of Basharat Hussain, a resident of Dunadi village, was fished out from the Lopa stream in Doda.

Another two men were rescued from a swollen Ujh river in Kathua. — *PTI*

TN's Nagapattinam fishermen attacked by Lankan pirates

NAGAPATTINAM, 26 JUNE

Eight fishermen from Seruthur village in Nagapattinam, Tamil Nadu, were attacked at sea on Wednesday night, allegedly by Sri Lankan pirates. The assailants, arriving in a mechanised boat, boarded the fishermen's two vessels about 20 nautical miles east of Kodiyakarai and looted their nets, equipment, and catch.

One fisherman, Senthilnathan, 42, sustained a serious head injury, while three others were also hurt. The group returned to shore by Thursday morning and rushed the injured to Nagapattinam Government Medical College Hospital.

RMP Rajendira Nattar, President of the Indian National Fishermen Union, condemned the assault, calling it part of a growing pattern of violence. He urged both state and central governments to take immediate action to protect Tamil Nadu's fishermen from further attacks, which have become disturbingly frequent in the region's disputed waters. — *PTI*

Pahalgam impact: Amarnath Yatra footfall down 10%

SRINAGAR, 26 JUNE

Jammu and Kashmir's Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, announced a 10.19 per cent decline in pilgrim registrations for this year's Amarnath Yatra, attributed to the recent terror attack in Pahalgam that claimed 26 lives. Before the attack on 22 April, around 236,000 pilgrims had registered, but interest waned significantly afterward. The Shri Amarnath Shrine Board has since initiated a re-verification process, with 85,000 pilgrims confirming their registrations.

In response to security concerns, 180 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) have been deployed, an increase of 30 from last year, to ensure a safe pilgrimage. Pilgrims are urged to travel in official convoys from the Bhagwati Nagar base camp.—*PTI*

Blue Flag beaches to boost Andaman eco-tourism

PORT BLAIR, 26 JUNE

To enhance eco-tourism, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration is set to expand its Blue Flag beach certifications, which currently include only Radhanagar Beach. Chief Secretary Chandra Bhushan Kumar announced that evaluations for five additional beaches have recently been conducted, aiming to attract more environmentally conscious tourists. In India, there are presently 12 Blue Flag beaches recognised by the Denmark-based Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE). Kumar noted that a new modern jetty terminal at Swaraj Dweep is nearing completion, anticipating increased tourist footfall. The administration is also prioritising cultural tourism, planning new festivals to showcase local traditions, cuisine, and arts. —*PTI*

Kamakhya temple doors reopen after 'Ambubachi Mela'

GUWAHATI, 26 JUNE

The Kamakhya temple reopened its doors to devotees on Thursday, following the four-day 'Ambubachi Mela'. This annual event coincides with the ritualistic menstrual cycle of Goddess Kamakhya, during which worship at the temple ceases. The temple was closed from Sunday until its reopening today. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma expressed his prayers for prosperity in a message upon the temple's reopening. The Ambubachi Mela, known for attracting thousands of visitors, began on 22 June The event successfully demonstrated coordination among numerous security personnel, volunteers, and private guards, ensuring the festival proceeded without any incidents.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Google VP gives ₹1 cr to Tirumala temple board

TIRUPATI, 26 JUNE

In a generous gesture, Google Vice President Thota Chandrasekhar donated Rs 1 crore to the SV Pranadana Trust of the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) on Thursday. The cheque was handed over in Tirumala, where Chandrasekhar met with TTD Chairman BR Naidu. TTD officials expressed their gratitude for the significant contribution during the meeting. The TTD serves as the official custodian of the Tirumala temple, which is recognised as the wealthiest Hindu shrine globally. This donation is expected to support various charitable and spiritual initiatives undertaken by the trust, enhancing community welfare and religious engagement within the region. It underscores the growing collaboration between corporate leadership and religious institutions. —*PTI*

Rescue operation underway after a vehicle carrying pilgrims fell into river Alaknanda in Rudraprayag district, Uttarakhand, on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Learning like a baby to walk: Shukla from space

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla on Thursday said he was learning to live in microgravity conditions "like a baby" and it was an amazing experience to float in vacuum as the Dragon spacecraft circled the Earth in its journey to dock at the International Space Station.

Shukla and three other astronauts lifted off from NASA's Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on board the Dragon spacecraft, powered by the Falcon-9 rocket for a 14-day stay at the International Space Station (ISS).

Shukla shared his experience via a video-link from the spacecraft, saying "Wow, what a ride it was. When I was sitting in capsule Grace yesterday on the launchpad, the only thought in my mind was let's just go. After 30 days of quarantine, it was a feeling that I just wanted to go. Excitement was very far away. There was just this feeling that let us just leave."

Meanwhile, astronaut Rakesh Sharma, the first Indian to journey into space in 1984, said space travel alters the mindset of humans and makes them see the world from a perspective that "this planet belongs to everyone" and is not the sole preserve of anyone. Sharma had spent eight days in orbit. —*PTI*

Shubhanshu Shukla with three other astronauts inside space capsule Grace; Rakesh Sharma **PHOTO: PTI**

Bus with pilgrims falls into river in U'khand; 3 dead, 9 missing

RUDRAPRAYAG, 26 JUNE

Three people were killed, eight injured and nine others reported missing on Thursday when a bus carrying 20 pilgrims from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra to Badrinath fell into the Alaknanda river here.

The vehicle met with the accident near the Gholtir village on the Badrinath National Highway between Rudraprayag and Gauchar.

Relief and rescue efforts are underway with the help of local villagers.

Three bodies have been recovered so far.

Two bodies were recovered from near the accident site and one from the river near Rudraprayag. They were identified as Gauri Soni and Vishal Soni from Madhya Pradesh's Rajgarh and Drimmy from Gujarat's.

The accident occurred at around 7.30am as the bus fell into the river several hundred feet down the road with a loud bang, Bhandari, who lives close to the accident site, said.

The injured driver of the vehicle, hailing from Kankhal in Haridwar, claimed the bus fell into the river after being hit by a truck coming from the opposite direction.

Eight people, including four women and two children, were injured in the accident while nine others went missing. The injured were rushed to the district hospital. Four among them were airlifted to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Rishikesh.

Those airlifted to AIIMS are Deepika Soni, Hemlata Soni, Ishwar Soni and the driver Sumit. — *PTI*

WHEN DEVOTION MEETS FERVOUR

Thousands of devotees gather to have a glimpse of Lord Balram and Devi Subhadra ahead of the Jagannath Yatra in Puri in Odisha on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Class 8 boy stabs to death Class 10 boy in M'rashtra

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

A 13-year-old Class 8 student at a school in Ahilyanagar, Maharashtra, stabbed to death a 15-year-old Class 10 student of the same school on Wednesday following an altercation over a cricket match, a police officer said.

The accused has been detained and will be produced before the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) on Thursday, the officer said.

The boys got into a fight at the school over playing cricket during the mid-day break around 3.30pm. As the argument heated up, the younger boy attacked the older one with a knife in the stomach and head.

He was rushed to the district hospital, where he succumbed to the injuries. —*Agencies*

15 TRAINS DIVERTED

Distressed Telangana woman drives car on railway tracks

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

A distressed woman on Thursday drove her car along the railway tracks for nearly eight kilometres near Shankarpally in Telangana's Ranga Reddy district leading to disruption of services of about 10-15 trains.

The woman, hailing from Uttar Pradesh was a former employee of a multinational software company. When police officials finally managed to apprehend her, she behaved aggressively.

Viral videos showed the woman driving a white Kia Sonet along the railway tracks, while a group of railway staff, police officers, and local residents attempted to stop it. Several people could be seen running behind the vehicle. She was forcibly removed from the vehicle by a group, as she resisted and yelled in Hindi.

Police launched an investigation to determine her mental state and the motive behind her actions. The possibility of her trying to portray the incident as a suicide attempt or even a staged murder is being probed. Her driving licence and PAN card were recovered from the car.

Several train services were either halted or diverted due to the safety risk. 10–15 passenger services, including a Bengaluru-Hyderabad train had to be diverted to prevent an accident on the tracks. Trains were delayed up to 45 minutes because of the incident.

"The woman did not cooperate at all. It took 20 people to finally bring her out of the car," said one railway official on the site of the incident.

The police took the woman into custody and doctors were examining her health and mental state. The railway police registered a case against her. —*Agencies*

Viral videos showed the woman driving a white Kia Sonet along the railway tracks, while a group of railway staff, police officers and local residents attempted to stop it **PHOTO: X/ MUKUND SHAHI**

RG Kar murder: Lower court to rule on parents' plea

KOLKATA, 26 JUNE

The Calcutta High Court has remitted the decision concerning a plea from the parents of murdered RG Kar Hospital doctor to the trial court. The parents, represented by counsel Phiroze Edulji, requested permission to inspect the crime scene, excluding the seminar room where their daughter's body was discovered on 9 August 2024.

In response to nationwide outrage following the rape and murder of the on-duty doctor within the hospital premises, the High Court had previously transferred the investigation to the CBI.

Justice Tirthankar Ghosh stated that as further investigation is ongoing under the CBI's jurisdiction, no order could be made without notifying the magistrate. He advised that the petitioners approach the ACJM court directly, which would address the application within 48 hours.

Deputy Solicitor General Rajdeep Majumdar highlighted that the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is responsible for security at the hospital, necessitating judicial permission for the visit. —*PTI*

Maintain law & order during festivals: Yogi

LUCKNOW, 26 JUNE

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has chaired a high-level to review preparations for upcoming festivals, directing officials to maintain law and order.

With festivals such as Shravan (11 July–9 August), the Kanwar Yatra, Shravani Shivratri, Nag Panchami, Raksha Bandhan, Jagannath Rath Yatra (27 June–8 July), and Muharram (27 June–7 July) approaching, the chief minister stressed on the period's sensitivity.

Adityanath called for inter-departmental coordination, especially in key districts like Ghaziabad, Ayodhya, Prayagraj, and Bareilly. DJs, slogans, and procession routes must adhere to guidelines; display of weapons and communal provocation is strictly banned.

Cleanliness, lighting, drinking water, medical aid, and crowd control were also emphasised. —*PTI*

WIFE, LOVER AMONG 8 HELD FOR MURDER OF TELANGANA LAND SURVEYOR

HYDERABAD, 26 JUNE

Eight individuals, including a newlywed woman and her lover, have been arrested in connection with the murder of a land surveyor in the Gadwal district of Telangana.

The victim, 32-year-old Tejeshwar, was reported missing on 17 June. Police found a CCTV footage showing him leaving in a car with known associates. His body was later found near Panyam town in AP.

Police said Tirumala Rao was in an illicit relationship with Aishwarya, who was engaged to Tejeshwar. Under family pressure, Aishwarya married Tejeshwar in May, prompting Rao and Aishwarya to plot his murder with the assistance of a contract killer. —*PTI*

FUNERAL FOR JUSTICE

Protests broke out against police brutality and bad governance, in downtown Nairobi, Kenya, on Wednesday. At least 16 were killed in the protests and 400 were injured while two police stations were razed. The demonstrations erupted after a blogger died in custody and gained further momentum after a civilian was shot by police during the initial protests ***PHOTO: PTI***

A BATTERED IRAN FACES AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

After the war with Israel, Iran must rebuild its decimated security forces ***PHOTO: ANI***

The bombing has quieted in Iran's 12-day conflict with Israel. Now its battered theocracy and 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei must regroup and rebuild in a changed landscape.

Israeli airstrikes decimated the upper ranks of Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard and depleted its arsenal of ballistic missiles. Israeli missiles and American bunker-buster bombs damaged the nuclear program — though how much remains disputed.

Iran's self-described "Axis of Resistance," a group of allied countries and militias in the Mideast, has been mauled by the Israelis since Hamas' 7 October, 2023, attack. Foreign support Tehran may have expected from China and Russia never materialised. At home, old problems remain, particularly an economy wrecked by international sanctions, corruption and mismanagement.

"Iran's leadership has been dealt a heavy blow and will be conscious of preserving the ceasefire" the Eurasia Group, a political risk consultancy, said in an analysis Wednesday.

One thing Israel's campaign showed was how much its intelligence agencies have infiltrated Iran — particularly its swift pinpointing of military and Guard commanders and top nuclear scientists for strikes. The No. 1 task for Khamenei may be to root out any suspected disloyalty.

"There must be some sort of purge. But who will implement it?" said Hamidreza Azizi, a visiting fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. "This level of distrust that apparently exists now is going to paralyse any effective planning or security overhaul".

In that atmosphere, rebuilding Iran's military, particularly its Revolutionary Guard, will be a challenge. But the forces have a deep bench of officers. One top survivor of the war, Gen Esmail Qaani, in charge of the Guard's expeditionary Quds Force, was seen in videos of a pro-government demonstration in Tehran on Tuesday.

Khamenei also has to rethink the security policy he wove together over the past two decades. The "Axis of Resistance" alliances allowed Iran to project its power across the Mideast but also was seen as a defensive buffer. That buffer has now been breached.

Khamenei might conclude that his country can only protect itself by turning its nuclear capability into an actual bomb, as North Korea did.

Iran has always said its nuclear program is peaceful. But now voices within the system demanding a bomb are likely growing, Azizi said.

Still, any drive for a nuclear weapon would be a major gamble. The extent of damage from the US and Israeli barrages remains unclear, but Iran certainly needs to rebuild its nuclear facilities and centrifuge infrastructure, whether that takes months or years.

And it would have to do all that in extreme secrecy, concealed from Israeli and US intelligence. Were Israel to catch wind, it could resume strikes.

Khamenei could also take the opposite path, resuming talks with the US in hopes of winning sanctions relief.

Many also fear an intensified crackdown on dissent, as a leadership battered by war regroups amid mounting problems at home. Iran's frail economy has been wrecked by international sanctions, corruption and years of mismanagement.

For months, the ailing power grid has been plagued by rolling blackouts. The flight of much of Tehran's population during the war temporarily eased the strain. But as they return, even longer blackouts are likely to come, disrupting everything from bakeries to factories.

The war also shut down Tehran's stock market and currency exchange shops, pausing a collapse of Iran's rial currency.

Back in 2015 when Iran reached its nuclear deal with world powers, the rial traded at 32,000 to USD 1. Today, it is near 1 million rials to the dollar. Once businesses reopen in force, the plunge could resume.

The economy has sparked unrest in the past. After state-set gasoline prices rose in 2019, protests spread across some 100 cities and towns, with gas stations and banks burned down. In the ensuing crackdown, at least 321 people were killed and thousands detained, according to Amnesty International.

Then there's the 2022 protests over the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman who had been detained by security forces allegedly over not wearing her headscarf, or hijab, to their liking. In a monthslong crackdown, more than 500 were killed and over 22,000 detained.

Many women in Tehran still refuse to wear the hijab. But activists worry the war will trigger new restrictions.

Meanwhile, the question of Khamenei's successor still persists.

"People have been talking of a transition from clergy-dominated Islamic Republic to a military-dominated one," Azizi said. "This war has made that more plausible (for the next government." *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

Psychologists explain why Trump speaks with fury

US President Donald Trump's latest forthright outburst was made as part of his attempts to create a peace deal with Iran and Israel.

"I'm not happy with Israel," he told reporters on 24 June. "We basically have two countries that have been fighting so long and so hard that they don't know what the f**k they're doing."

This came a day after Trump had announced a ceasefire between Israel and Iran. By the next day, the ceasefire had been violated by both Iran and Israel. Trump was clearly furious, and his language showed it.

This was not a verbal slip – there was no immediate correction, no apology, no nonverbal indication of embarrassment. He just stormed off, clearly angry.

This is not the kind of language that is normally associated with a President. Some have been reported to use the f-word before, but usually behind closed doors.

In fact, Trump's furious, aggressive response was like something straight out of an old psychology textbook.

In the 1930s, psychologists developed the frustration-aggression hypothesis to explain how aggressive behaviour can arise. The hypothesis suggested that when a person's goal is blocked in some way, it leads to frustration, which then results in aggression.

Aggression was considered a "natural" way of releasing this unpleasant state of frustration.

Over the next few decades, this hypothesis was thought by most psychologists to be a gross oversimplification of complex human behaviour. It assumed a direct causal relationship between frustration and aggression, ignoring all the other situational and cognitive factors that can intervene.

Human beings are more complex than that, psychologists argued — they find other ways of dealing with their frustrations. They use their rational system of thought to find solutions. They don't have to lash out when they're frustrated in this seemingly primitive way.

Perhaps, that's why many people feel shocked when they watch this US President in certain situations. To many of us, it all seems so basic.

Nobel laureate and psychologist Daniel Kahneman, in his book Thinking, Fast and Slow (2011), characterised the two systems that underpin everyday decision-making. His work may help with understanding of what's going on here.

He describes system one as the evolutionary, basic system. It operates unconsciously, automatically and very quickly, handling everyday tasks like reading other people's emotions, without any effort.

It is an intuitive system designed to work in a world full of approach and avoidance, scary animals and friendly animals. It is heavily reliant on affect to guide decision-making.

In contrast, system two is slower, more deliberative. It requires conscious effort and is used for complex thinking, solving difficult problems, or making careful decisions.

Kahneman says that system one is a bit of a "workaholic", beavering away all the time, making "suggestions" for system two to endorse. Good decisions – depend upon system two checking the suggestions of system one. But system one often jumps quickly and unconsciously to certain conclusions. System two should check them, but often doesn't, even when it would be easy.

It appears that Trump makes decisions very quickly (system one), often without extensive deliberation or consultation with advisers. Both in his presidency and in his business career, he seemed to prioritise immediate action over any sort of prolonged and thoughtful analysis. That's why he changes his mind so often.

His decisions seem to be driven by strong emotions. His response to events, opponents and issues are often passionate and visceral. This could lead to decisions being unduly influenced by personal feelings, first impressions based on arbitrary cues, and interpersonal perceptions, rather than anything more substantial.

Trump's style of decision-making emphasises immediacy and emotional conviction, which can be effective in rallying supporters and creating a sense of decisiveness. However, it also can lead to unpredictable outcomes and, as has been seen again and again, somewhat controversial, impulsive actions.

Many suggest that Trump's decision-making style reflects his background in the high-pressure and high-stakes world of business, where quick judgements and gut instinct can be advantageous in these sorts of competitive winner-takes-all environments.

But the world at war is a more precarious place, where system one needs to be kept firmly in check. Gut instincts may have a role to play, but system two needs to be more vigilant. *—PTI*

US President Donald Trump dropped the f-word when describing Israel and Iran ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

What to know about Islamic New Year & how Muslims observe it

Muslims will soon welcome a new year in the Islamic lunar calendar, known as the Hijri calendar.

The Hijri New Year, beginning on the first day of the month of Muharram, signals a chance for spiritual reflection and religious resolutions, set in the month following the annual Hajj in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.

Here's what to know about the holiday and how Muslims observe it:

The Hijri New Year began around Thursday

This Hijri New Year is expected to fall on or around 26 June, ushering in the year 1447 AH (which stands for "anno hegirae" or "the year of the Hijrah" in Latin).

The exact date can vary depending on when regional Islamic authorities see the crescent moon.

Because the Hijri calendar is lunar, the dates of Islamic months and holidays — such as Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr — change annually. The new year corresponds with the first sighting of the crescent moon during Muharram, the first of 12 months in the Hijri calendar.

The calendar began in year 622

The Hijri calendar begins counting from 622 CE, the year the Prophet Muhammad emigrated from Mecca to Medina, fleeing persecution.

This journey, known as the Hijrah or migration in Arabic, led to the religious, social and political consolidation of the hen-nascent Muslim community.

Muslims will soon welcome a new year in the Islamic lunar calendar, known as the Hijri calendar ***PHOTO: PTI***

The day is more solemn than festive

Muharram is one of four sacred months during which Islam forbids warfare, a condition that encourages increased prayer, charity and reflection throughout the month. More than 20 countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Morocco and Syria, have designated the Hijri New Year a national holiday.

While the passage of the Islamic New Year is generally more solemn and introspective than festive, Muslims may observe the holiday differently, according to their school of thought.

For Shiite Muslims especially, the first 10 days of Muharram mark a significant period of mourning: On the 10th of Muharram in 680 CE, the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Hussein was killed in battle.

Ten days into the new year on Ashoura, waves of Shiite mourners walk the streets dressed in black, beating their chests or self-flagellating in public grief.

Sunni Muslims commemorate Ashoura through voluntary fasting, as the day for them marks Moses' parting of the Red Sea.

Iran and Gaza wars will impact observations of the new year

Mass demonstrations of mourning on Ashoura are known to unfold in Tehran and other cities in the Shiite-majority Iran.

But more than a week into a campaign of strikes by Israel, the streets of Tehran have been largely deserted, businesses are closed, and with no bomb shelters open, many shelter on the floor of metro stations.

Thousands have fled the city.

Israel launched a major attack on Iran on 13 June, striking the heart of Iran's nuclear and military structure in Tehran and triggering a war between the two longtime foes.

Ashoura demonstrations in Pakistan, Lebanon and Iraq have also been a site of tributes to Palestinians.

This Hijri New Year is the second to pass since the Israel-Hamas war began in October 2023.

Israel's military offensive in Gaza has since killed more than 55,000 Palestinians in the predominantly Muslim area, according to the Gaza Health Ministry.

It does not distinguish between civilians and combatants but has said most of the dead are women and children. *—PTI*

2 killed, 17 injured as severe storms sweep France

PARIS, 26 JUNE

Torrential storms sweeping across France have resulted in the deaths of two individuals and left 17 injured. The storm caused significant damage, uprooting trees and flooding streets in Paris, where the National Assembly's roof sprung a leak during a parliamentary session. Prime Minister François Bayrou noted the weather disruption while addressing lawmakers. Authorities reported one person in critical condition, while power outages affected 110,000 households. Tragically, a 12-year-old child was killed by a falling tree in southwest France, and a man died when his quad-bike collided with another fallen tree in the northwest. The storms followed a recent heatwave across the country, leading to widespread chaos and emergency responses. *—PTI*

Indian woman assaulted in Winnipeg

WINNIPEG, 26 JUNE

A 23-year-old Indian woman, identified by community members as Tanpreet Kaur, was brutally assaulted and robbed near her home in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The incident occurred shortly after midnight on 23 June as Kaur was returning from her evening shift. Two assailants ambushed her on Roslyn Road. Winnipeg police reported that Kaur was stabbed during the attack but managed to disarm one of the suspects, holding onto the knife while still being assaulted. Bystanders intervened, prompting the suspects to flee. Kaur was taken to hospital in critical condition. A 17-year-old girl has been arrested in connection with the attack and is facing charges including aggravated assault and robbery. She has been placed in police custody. *—PTI*

Mass shooting kills 12 at Mexico's religious festival

MEXICO CITY, 26 JUNE

A tragic shooting during a celebration in Irapuato, Guanajuato, has left twelve people dead and approximately 20 others injured. The violence erupted as revellers were celebrating St John the Baptist in the streets. Eyewitness accounts describe scenes of chaos as people fled the gunfire. Guanajuato's official, Rodolfo Gómez Cervantes, confirmed the death toll in a news briefing, stating that the situation is under investigation. This incident follows a previous shooting at a Catholic Church event in the region that resulted in seven fatalities last month. Guanajuato, known for its escalating violence due to conflicts among organized crime groups, has recorded a staggering 1,435 homicides in past five months. *—PTI*

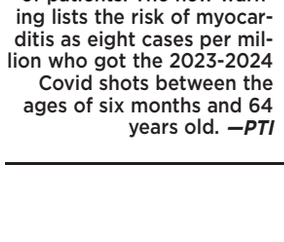


PHOTO: X

FDA warns of rare heart risk with Covid shots

WASHINGTON, 26 JUNE

The Food and Drug Administration said on Wednesday it has expanded existing warnings on the two leading Covid-19 vaccines about a rare heart side effect mainly seen in young men. Myocarditis, a type of heart inflammation that is usually mild, emerged as a complication after the first shots became widely available in 2021. Prescribing information from both Pfizer and Moderna already advises doctors about the issue. In April, the FDA sent letters to both drugmakers asking them to update and expand the warnings to add more detail about the problem and to cover a larger group of patients. The new warning lists the risk of myocarditis as eight cases per million who got the 2023-2024 Covid shots between the ages of six months and 64 years old. *—PTI*

Slapped America in face, says Khamenei

Supreme Leader says Iran was victorious, US intervention prevented decimation of Israel

DUBAI, 26 JUNE

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Thursday his country had delivered a "slap to America's face" with its strike on an American base in Qatar, and warned against any further US attacks in his first public comments since a ceasefire was declared with Israel after 12 days of war.

Khamenei spoke in a recorded video broadcast on Iranian state television, his first appearance since 19 June. The 86-year-old looked and sounded more tired than he did only a week ago, speaking in a hoarse voice and occasionally stumbling over his words.

The more-than 10-minute speech by the Supreme Leader was filled with warnings and threats directed toward the United States and Israel.

He downplayed Sunday's US strikes on three Iranian nuclear sites using bunker-buster bombs and cruise missiles, saying that US President Donald Trump — who said the attack "completely and fully obliterated Iran's nuclear programme — had "exaggerated" its impact.

Iranian protesters hold their country's flags and posters of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in an anti-US and anti-Israeli rally at Enqelab-e-Eslami square in downtown Tehran on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

"They could not achieve anything significant," he said.

The head of the UN nuclear watchdog, International Atomic Energy Agency Director Rafael Grossi, however, reiterated on Thursday that the damage done by Israeli and US strikes at Iranian nuclear facilities "is very, very, very considerable."

"I think annihilated is too much but it suffered enormous damage," Grossi told French broadcaster RFI.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Esmail Baghaei, on Wednesday also conceded that "our nuclear installations have been badly damaged, that's for sure."

Khamenei claimed the US had only intervened in the war because "it felt that if it did not intervene, the Zionist regime would be utterly destroyed." "It entered the war to save them, yet it gained nothing," he said.

He said his country's attack on the US base in Qatar on Monday was significant, since it shows Iran "has access to important US centres in the region and can act against them whenever it deems necessary."

"The Islamic Republic was victorious and, in retaliation, delivered a hand slap to America's face," the Iranian leader said. *—PTI*

Mossad vows to continue ops in Iran

TEL AVIV, 26 JUNE

David Barnea, Chief of Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, said the organisation will continue its activities in Iran.

"We will continue to keep a close eye on all of Iran's projects that we already know in the most in-depth way. We will be there as we have been there until now," he said.

Barnea said that with "accurate intelligence, advanced technologies and unimaginable operational capabilities, we helped the Air Force disrupt the Iranian nuclear programme, establish air superiority and reduce missile threat, ensuring the security of the citizens of Israel." *—Agencies*

Israel halts aid delivery to Gaza claiming Hamas seizures

CAIRO/TEL AVIV, 26 JUNE

Israel has suspended aid deliveries to Gaza for two days to prevent alleged seizing of supplies by Hamas, an Israeli official confirmed on Thursday.

The United Nations also confirmed that all aid destined for northern Gaza had been halted. This decision follows the circulation of a video showing masked men, some armed, on aid trucks. However, local leaders claim they were protecting the aid rather than facilitating its theft.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defence Minister Israel Katz stated they are developing a plan to secure aid against potential Hamas interference, citing new information suggesting that Hamas has been diverting supplies meant for civilians.

However, the Higher Commission for Tribal Affairs, representing key clans, said that there was no interference of Hamas, and said that the aid security process was managed "solely through tribal efforts".

Meanwhile, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza deepens, with escalating shortages of food and water as Israeli airstrikes continue to claim civilian lives. *—Agencies*

Social media info must for US visa

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Outlining each visa adjudication as a "national security decision", the US has asked applicants to reveal their social media usernames or handles they have used in the last five years.

The US Embassy in India shared the information in a brief statement issued on Thursday, which also cautioned against "omitting" social media information as it could lead to "visa denial and ineligibility for future visas".

The statement, posted on X said, "Visa applicants are required to list all social media usernames or handles of every platform they have used from the last 5 years on the DS-160 visa application form. Applicants certify that the information in their visa application is true and correct before they sign and submit."

The US Embassy in India shared the information in a brief statement it posted on X on Thursday **PHOTO: X**

The communication continued, "Omitting social media information could lead to visa denial and ineligibility for future visas."

On 23 June, the US Embassy asked those applying for an F, M, or J non-immigrant visa to switch the privacy settings of their social media accounts to "public" to facilitate vetting, which it said was necessary to establish their identity and admissibility to the US under law.

F or M category is for student visas and J category for exchange visitor visa.

On 19 June, the embassy said a US visa was "a privilege, not a right" *—PTI*

Trump gets 'golden share' power in US Steel buyout

President Donald Trump will control the so-called "golden share" that's part of the national security agreement under which he allowed Japan-based Nippon Steel to buy out iconic American steelmaker US Steel, according to disclosures with the US Securities and Exchange Commission.

The provision gives the President the power to appoint a board member and have a say in company decisions that affect domestic steel production and competition with overseas producers. *—PTI*

Snake oil salesman: Mamdani faces racism

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

MAGA supporters edited a photo of the Statue of Liberty to show it covered in a burqa ; (inset) Zohran Mamdani **PHOTO: X**

Zohran Mamdani, the newly elected Democratic candidate for the upcoming New York mayoral election, has become the target of fierce criticism from various political figures following his primary victory. US President Donald Trump described the 33-year-old as a "100 per cent Communist Lunatic" and accused the Democrats of crossing a line. His sentiments were echoed by New York City Mayor Eric Adams, who labelled Mamdani a "snake oil salesman" during an appearance on "Fox & Friends."

Adams argued that Mamdani's ambitious proposals, which include freezing rents on regulated apartments and providing free public services, are unrealistic and dismissed the candidate's claim that a $10 billion tax increase on the wealthy could fund them. "As the mayor, you don't have the ability to do that," the incumbent mayor stated.

Lawrence Summers, former Treasury Secretary under Barack Obama, expressed alarm at the implications of Mamdani's victory for the Democratic Party, noting, "I am profoundly alarmed about the future of the party and the country." *—Agencies*

UKRAINE BLOCKS RUSSIAN TROOPS' ADVANCE TO SUMY

KYIV, 26 JUNE

Ukrainian forces have successfully halted Russia's recent advances in the northern Sumy region, stabilising the front line near the border, said Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskyi, commander in chief of Ukraine's armed forces. He said Ukrainian troops prevented Russia from deploying approximately 50,000 troops, including elite airborne and marine brigades, to other front-line areas. However, this assertion lacks independent verification, and Russian officials have not commented.

Despite ongoing Russian efforts, which have led to incremental territorial gains at a significant cost in troop casualties and equipment, the Ukrainian army has relied heavily on drones. *—PTI*

N Korea opening tourist site

SEOUL, 26 JUNE

North Korea next week will open a signature tourist site on its east coast that it called a prelude to a new era in its tourism industry, though there is no word on when the country will fully reopen its borders to foreign visitors.

The Wonsan-Kalma coastal tourist zone has hotels and other accommodations for nearly 20,000 guests who can swim in the sea, play sports and other recreation activities and eat at restaurants and cafeterias on site, state media said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un toured the site and cut the inaugural tape at a lavish ceremony Tuesday, the official Korean Central News Agency reported Thursday.

He said its construction would be recorded as "one of the greatest successes this year" and called the site "the proud first step" toward realising the government's policy of developing tourism, according to KCNA.

Although no foreign tourists are allowed in the country owing to Covid-era restrictions, Russian tour company Vostok Intur has arranged a week-long trip for a group of travellers on 7 July, according to the resort's website. *—PTI*

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his daughter Kim Ju Ae at Kalma Coastal Tourist Zone in Wonsan on Tuesday **PHOTO: X**

29 kids killed in stampede

BANGUI, 26 JUNE

An explosion and the stampede that followed killed at least 29 schoolchildren and injured more than 250 at a high school in Central African Republic's (CAR) capital city, authorities said Thursday.

The explosion occurred on Wednesday at the Barthelemy Boganda High School in Bangui when power was being restored to an electrical transformer within the school premises after it malfunctioned, according to the country's Ministry of National Education.

Most of the victims – including 16 girls – died at the scene after the explosion resulted in a stampede while others were confirmed dead at the hospital, the Ministry of Health said in a statement.

At least 260 were injured and being treated in various hospitals after the incident, the ministry said.

Some of the victims died after jumping out of the building while others were killed in the stampede at the crowded entrance to the upper floors in an attempt to escape. *—PTI*

MOST MADE IN INDIA

Faulty Indian cancer drugs shipped to 100 countries

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

A study by the Bureau of Investigative Journalism (TBIJ) found that nearly 100 countries are receiving cancer drugs that failed quality testing. The study, published on 26 June, highlighted that about a fifth of the cancer drugs failed the quality tests with 16 of the 17 implicated manufacturers being India-based.

The drugs in question were 'generic drugs', which often formed the backbone of treatment plans for numerous common cancers including breast, ovarian and leukemia. Some drugs contained so little of their key ingredient that pharmacists said giving them to patients would be as good as doing nothing, TBIJ said.

The study examined the quantity of an active ingredient in seven common types of cancer drugs: cisplatin, cyclophosphamide, doxorubicin, ifosfamide, leucovorin, methotrexate and oxaliplatin

The majority of failed drugs had too little active ingredient (for most this meant less than 88 per cent of the amount stated on the label) while some contained too much (more than 112 per cent). Both thresholds were decided by researchers based on international standards, TBIJ said.

Doctors from multiple countries told TBIJ of the drugs in question not working as expected, leaving patients suddenly unresponsive to treatment. Other patients suffered side effects so toxic that they could no longer tolerate the medicine.

The drugs were sent to countries all over the world, including US, China, India, UK, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Middle Eastern nations, and nearly every country in Africa.

Generic drugs are used more frequently by people with lower-incomes, as they are cheaper. Were generic drugs not available, cancer treatment would not be available to much of Sub-Saharan Africa, TBIJ said.

Similarly, Countries like Nepal and Bangladesh lack the resources and the expertise to verify drug quality.

—Salar News with Agencies

The drugs in question were 'generic drugs', the backbone of treatment plans **PHOTO: X**

What are generic drugs?

Generic drugs are created to be the same as an already marketed brand-name drug in dosage form, safety, strength, route of administration, quality, performance characteristics, and intended use. In other words, are versions of a drug that can be made once the original manufacturer's exclusivity rights have expired and are typically made far more cheaply.

SOUTH AFRICA FLOOD TOLL CROSSES 100

BANGUI, 26 JUNE

The death toll from severe floods that inundated parts of South Africa's rural Eastern Cape province two weeks ago has risen to 101, with a 12-month-old baby the youngest fatality, authorities said Thursday. Two children are still missing.

Heavy rain on 9 and 10 June caused by a cold front resulted in floods that swept away victims and their houses, trapped others in their homes, damaged roads and other infrastructure and cut electricity supplies.

Zolile Williams, an Eastern Cape provincial said 94 of the 101 victims had been identified and their bodies had been handed over to families. This included 38 children. More than 4,000 people have been left homeless in the Eastern Cape province. *—PTI*

Gold holds steady at ₹98,600/10g; silver unchanged

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Gold prices remained flat at Rs 98,600 per 10g in Delhi on Thursday, said All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also held steady at Rs 98,050 per 10g, inclusive of taxes. Silver prices were unchanged at Rs 1,03,100 per kg. Globally, spot gold edged up to USD 3,334.41 per ounce, supported by bargain buying and a weakening US dollar. "The US dollar index dipped below 97.0 — its lowest since March 2022 — following weak US economic data and growing fiscal concerns," said Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst, HDFC Securities. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Rupee rises 41P to close at 85.67 against USD

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

The rupee rose 41 paise to 85.67 against the US dollar on Thursday on the back of a sharp drop in the greenback and a strong show in the domestic equity markets amid rise in risk appetite. The rupee extended its gains supported by a rise in risk appetite in global markets after the announcement of a ceasefire between Iran and Israel, forex traders said. Domestic markets rose by around a per cent each, while the US Dollar fell towards the 97-mark. Moreover, the broad decline in crude oil prices too favoured the domestic currency. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.91 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 85.63-85.93 before settling at 85.67 (provisional), up 41 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee settled lower by 3 paise at 86.08 against the US dollar. *—PTI*

Airtel's anti-fraud tool shields 3.5M Delhi users

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Telecom operator Airtel on Thursday said its advanced fraud detection system has protected over 3.5 million users in Delhi-NCR within 43 days of launch of the new tool. The statement assumes significance given the rising instances of digital frauds where unsuspecting users are lured online and deceived by scamsters leveraging advanced techniques, malicious links and fake profiles. The system, automatically enabled for all Airtel mobile and broadband customers, scans and filters links across SMS, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, e-mail, and other browsers. "It leverages real-time threat intelligence to examine over 1 billion URLs daily and blocks access to harmful sites in under 100 milliseconds," the telco informed. *—PTI*

Reliance Industries surpasses ₹20L cr market cap again

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Shares of Reliance Industries surged by nearly 2 per cent on Thursday, propelling its market capitalisation back above the impressive Rs 20 lakh crore mark. The stock rose by 1.90 per cent to close at Rs 1,495.20 on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), peaking during the day at Rs 1,498.70. Similarly, on the National Stock Exchange (NSE), it settled at Rs 1,495.30.

As a result of this rally, the company's market valuation increased by Rs 37,837.9 crore to Rs 20,23,375.31 crore. The surge in Reliance's stock significantly impacted the broader equity markets, with the BSE Sensex rising by 1,000.36 points to close at 83,755.87 and the Nifty advancing by 304.25 points to 25,549. Furthermore, Reliance shares have appreciated by 23 per cent this year. *—PTI*

Defence stocks soar on NATO fund boost

Nifty Defence Index rises by 1.5%, Astra and Zen by 4%

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Indian defence stocks rallied on Thursday, buoyed by expectations of increased export orders after NATO leaders pledged to ramp up defence spending.

At market close, Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) rose 0.53 per cent, Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) gained 0.85 per cent, and Paras Defence climbed 1.45 per cent. Data Patterns (India), Astra Microwave Products, and Zen Technologies also surged up to 4 per cent.

The Nifty India Defence Index advanced nearly 1.5 per cent, with most constituents trading in the green, reflecting upbeat sentiment following NATO's Hague Summit. Leaders reaffirmed their commitment to collective defence and pledged to invest up to 5 per cent of GDP annually in defence and security by 2035, including at least 3.5 per cent on core defence capabilities and up to 1.5 per cent on critical infrastructure protection. In 2024 alone, NATO nations spent over $1.3 trillion on core defence.

At NATO's Hague Summit, leaders reaffirmed their commitment to collective defence and pledged to invest up to 5 per cent of GDP annually in defence and security by 2035 **PHOTO: X/NATO**

Analysts believe this signals a strategic export opportunity for Indian defence manufacturers. The US and France, key NATO members, are already major importers of Indian defence products.

Potential beneficiaries identified include BEL, HAL, Bharat Dynamics (BDL), and Data Patterns, all specialising in high-tech defence systems. Private players such Zen Technologies, Paras Defence, Astra Microwave, Ideaforge, Bharat Forge, Solar Industries, and Dynamatic Technologies also stand to gain, thanks to their product readiness and supply relationships with global primes such as Boeing, Airbus, and Lockheed Martin.

Analysts warn, however, that export orders are a long-term play, often involving extended qualification processes. *—PTI*

Raphe raises $100M in record deal

NOIDA, 26 JUNE

Noida-based aerospace startup Raphe mPhibr has raised $100 million in a funding round led by General Catalyst, marking the largest private capital raise in India's aerospace manufacturing sector. The round also saw participation from Think Investments, Amal Parikh, and other family offices, bringing the company's total funding to $145 million.

Founded nearly a decade ago by siblings Vivek and Vikash Mishra, Raphe mPhibr designs and manufactures advanced unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), including the mR10 drone swarm, mR20 high-altitude logistics drone, Bharat surveillance drone, and the X8 maritime patrol system. Some of these are already in use by Indian defence forces. The investment aligns with India's drive to grow its private aerospace sector. *—Agencies*

'MEDIA SPECULATION'

Shell denies reports about BP takeover

LONDON, 26 JUNE

British oil giant Shell on Thursday denied media reports that it is in talks to buy rival BP.

The Wall Street Journal on Wednesday said Shell was holding "early-stage talks" to acquire BP, citing people familiar with the matter.

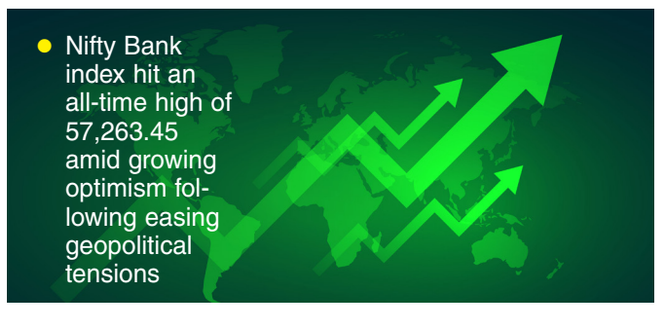
"In response to recent media speculation Shell wishes to clarify that it has not been actively considering making an offer for BP and confirms it has not made an approach to, and no talks have taken place with, BP with regards to a possible offer," Shell said in a statement to the London Stock Exchange.

Shell has repeatedly denied speculation that it was considering a takeover of its smaller rival BP, saying it was focused on streamlining and simplifying its own business.

Some analysts have suggested BP would be an attractive takeover after a plan to shift its focus to renewable energy, which was abandoned earlier this year, left its shares undervalued in comparison to other oil companies. BP has also struggled to recover from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon disaster, which killed 17 workers. *—PTI*

Investors gain ₹9.7L cr in 3-day surge

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE



Bank stocks led a robust market rally on Wednesday, pushing the Nifty Bank index to an all-time high of 57,263.45. The surge was fuelled by heavy buying in private lenders, particularly HDFC Bank, which jumped nearly 2 per cent to a record Rs 2,027 apiece, emerging as one of the top gainers on the Sensex and Nifty.

Meanwhile, investors' wealth jumped by Rs 9.70 lakh crore in three days of market rally amid growing optimism following easing geopolitical tensions.

HDFC Bank's continued upward momentum, now in its third consecutive session, coincides with strong investor interest in its subsidiary HDB Financial Services' Rs 12,500 crore IPO.

The rally also comes ahead of the record date, set for June 27, to determine dividend eligibility for shareholders.

Other key gainers included AU Small Finance Bank (up 1.7 per cent to Rs 821), Axis Bank (up 1.5 per cent to Rs 1,231), ICICI Bank (up nearly 1 per cent), while IndusInd Bank, PNB, Canara Bank, Bank of Baroda, and Kotak Mahindra Bank posted marginal gains.

The broader equity market also surged, with the Sensex rising 1,000.36 points (1.21 per cent) to close at 83,755.87, and the Nifty jumping 304.25 points (1.21 per cent) to 25,549. Gains were led by HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, and Bharti Airtel.

Global cues were mixed. Japan's Nikkei 225 ended higher, while South Korea's Kospi, Shanghai's SSE, and Hong Kong's Hang Seng declined. European markets traded in the green, while US markets ended mixed.

FIIs offloaded equities worth Rs 2,427.74 crore, while DIIs bought stocks worth Rs 2,372.96 crore. Brent crude edged up 0.18 per cent to $67.80 a barrel. *—Agencies*

NSE to launch monthly electricity futures

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The National Stock Exchange (NSE) will launch monthly electricity futures contracts within the next 2–3 weeks, enabling power buyers, sellers, traders, and industrial consumers to hedge against price volatility. The NSE has secured all necessary approvals, including from SEBI, and will announce the launch date soon, said Harish K Ahuja, head of sustainability, power, carbon markets, and listing.

Each contract, will cover 50 MWh. Pricing will be based on a 30-day weighted average from Indian Energy Exchange, Hindustan Power Exchange and HPL Electric. *—Agencies*

Aditya Birla Capital app hacked, ₹2cr gold from 435 accounts sold

MUMBAI, 26 JUNE

Aditya Birla Capital Ltd.'s digital arm suffered a cyberattack on 9 June, leading to illegal sale of digital gold worth Rs 1.95 crore from 435 customer accounts. The breach was discovered after affected users contacted the company's call centre, reporting unauthorised transactions.

The hacker tapped a vulnerability in the API linking the ABCD app and the company's server, bypassing the OTP verification process to sell users' digital gold. Transactions were processed via Razorpay and conducted through MMTC-PAMP, a government-authorised gold vendor.

The company quickly restored holdings to affected customers and froze fund transfers across multiple accounts. The digital gold selling feature was suspended, and the technical flaw was addressed.

An FIR was filed with the Central Region Cyber Police in Mumbai by Ravindra Rajmal Chaudhary, Head of Fraud Risk Management at Aditya Birla Capital Digital. The cyber cell has launched a full-scale investigation.

ADITYA BIRLA GROUP

- The hacker exploited a vulnerability in the API linking the ABCD app and the firm's server, bypassing the OTP verification process to sell users' digital gold

Aditya Birla Capital Digital is working with law enforcement, CERT-In, and cyber insurance partners to trace the perpetrators and enhance platform security. The ABCD app offers services such as digital gold, UPI, mutual funds, insurance, and silver, all of which are now under increased scrutiny following the breach. *—Agencies*

Nestlé India approves 1:1 bonus share issue

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Nestlé India has received approval from its board to issue bonus equity shares in a 1:1 ratio to existing shareholders. The bonus shares, each with a face value of Rs 1, will be fully allocated to members holding equity shares of the same face value, as disclosed in a regulatory filing.

The record date for identifying eligible shareholders will be announced in due course. The board's decision follows a previous announcement on 19 June regarding the consideration of this bonus share issue. The resolution is subject to final approval at an extraordinary general meeting (EGM) scheduled for 24 July. *—PTI*

Panasonic India exits fridge, washing machine biz

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Panasonic Holdings is set to exit the refrigerator and washing machine segments in India, shifting its focus to higher-growth areas such as televisions, air-conditioners, home automation, and energy solutions. The move is part of a broader global restructuring strategy, the company confirmed.

The Japanese electronics major will shut down the production lines for these categories at its Jhajjar plant in Haryana, which also serves as a contract manufacturing unit for other brands. Panasonic failed to capture significant market share in these loss-making segments, prompting the strategic withdrawal.

"In line with our global strategy and evolving market dynamics, Panasonic is focusing on future-ready growth areas," a company spokesperson said, adding that support for dealers and full customer service, including parts and warranty, will continue.

The restructuring will result in significant layoffs, likely in high double digits. Panasonic described this as a "difficult but necessary" step and committed to supporting affected employees.

The market responded promptly, with shares of Whirlpool and Voltas seeing early gains amid expectations of increased market share.

Whirlpool rose over 5 per cent to Rs 1,455 before settling at Rs 1,416, while Voltas peaked at Rs 1,341 before trading at Rs 1,315 by 10.35 am. *—Agencies*

Walmart top officials with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday **PHOTO: X/ Walmart**

Walmart CEO meets PM; to invest $10B in India

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Walmart Inc. President and CEO Doug McMillon met Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a two-day India visit, reaffirming Walmart's commitment to source $10 billion worth of goods annually from India by 2027.

Joined by Walmart International CEO Kath McLay and board member Steuart Walton, McMillon emphasised the company's deepening ties with India through Flipkart, PhonePe, Walmart Global Tech, and Walmart Sourcing.

The delegation discussed job creation, MSME empowerment, digital inclusion, and export growth. McMillon praised India's growth as "a story developing like a movie" and noted Walmart's progress in sourcing from India, having already procured over $30 billion in goods over the past two decades.

Walmart Vriddhi, its MSME development programme, aims to connect with 1 lakh additional small businesses in the next three years. McMillon also interacted with suppliers trained under Vriddhi and highlighted innovations in digital retail and agriculture.

Flipkart and PhonePe, now key arms of Walmart in India, have significantly contributed to digital inclusion. PhonePe has surpassed 600 million registered users and has a merchant network of over 40 million.

McLay reiterated Walmart's 20-year commitment to India, stating, "Business success should translate into community success."

Walmart continues to see India as a major driver of its global growth. *—Agencies*

Nvidia hits record high, now 'world's most valuable firm'

SAN FRANCISCO, 26 JUNE

Nvidia's shares soared over 4 per cent on Wednesday to a record high of USD154.10, pushing its market capitalisation to USD3.76 trillion and reclaiming the title of the world's most valuable company, overtaking Microsoft at USD3.65 trillion.

The rally was fuelled by Loop Capital raising its price target for Nvidia to USD250 from USD175, citing the onset of a "Golden Wave" of generative AI adoption. Analyst Ananda Baruah noted Nvidia is poised for another phase of stronger-than-expected demand, particularly for its high-end AI processors.

Nvidia has been a key beneficiary of the AI-driven tech boom, with its stock up over 60 per cent since its April low, when markets were shaken by tariff concerns. The company now trades at about 30 times projected earnings – below its five-year average of 40 – reflecting rapid earnings growth outpacing even its share price surge.

Microsoft and Apple, valued at USD3.0 trillion, have frequently traded places with Nvidia in recent months as top-valued firms. *—Agencies*

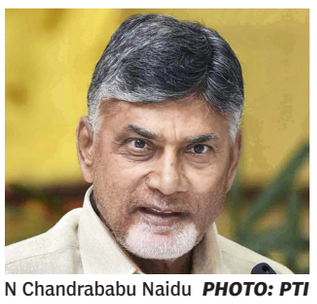
AMARAVATI IS CHOSEN SITE

AP to make India's 1st quantum technology ecosystem by 2026

AMARAVATI, 26 JUNE

Andhra Pradesh will establish India's first full-stack quantum technology hub, "Quantum Valley," by January 2026 under the National Quantum Mission, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's office announced on Wednesday. Spanning 50 acres in Amaravati, the Quantum Valley aims to integrate quantum computing, AI, semiconductor research, and defence innovation.

Major collaborators include IBM, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), and Larsen & Toubro (L&T). IBM will install a 156-qubit Quantum System Two, India's most powerful quantum computer, while TCS will develop quantum-integrated applications and L&T will lead infrastructure development.



N Chandrababu Naidu **PHOTO: PTI**

The initiative aligns with Amaravati's vision to be the world's first city powered entirely by renewable energy, featuring mandatory rooftop solar, district cooling systems and electric vehicle infrastructure. Quantum Valley will unify academic institutions, MNCs, and start-ups to accelerate research, IP creation, and high-end employment. *—PTI*

Getty withdraws copyright lawsuit against Stability AI

LONDON, 26 JUNE

Getty Images has withdrawn its copyright infringement allegations from its lawsuit against Stability AI as closing arguments began in a landmark case at Britain's High Court. The decision to drop these claims removes a critical aspect of the case involving Stability AI, the company behind the popular AI image generation tool, Stable Diffusion.

Getty had been a pioneer in challenging the use of online images for AI training, filing lawsuits in the UK and the US in early 2023. Getty will now pursue claims of trademark infringement. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Indian equestrian and Olympian Anush retires

HYDERABAD, 26 JUNE

Anush Agarwalla, India's first-ever Olympian in equestrian dressage, on Thursday announced the retirement of his iconic horse, Sir Caramello, marking the close of a historic era for Indian equestrian sport. The duo etched its names in history at the Paris Olympics, where they became the first Indian rider-horse pair to compete in dressage on the Olympic stage. Anush took to his social media to share the emotional announcement, posting a heartfelt tribute to Sir Caramello the horse who carried him and the nation to a sporting first. *—PTI*

Tickets sold out for India & Australia Sydney ODI

MELBOURNE, 26 JUNE

India's white-ball tour of Australia is still four months away, but Cricket Australia (CA) has already more than 90,000 tickets for eight matches, with the third ODI in Sydney and the first Twenty20 in Canberra completely sold out. India will travel Down Under in October-November to compete in three ODIs starting October 19 in Perth and five T20I the last one in Brisbane on 8 November. "The Australia vs India white ball series in October/November has generated immense excitement among cricket fans, particularly from the Indian diaspora," the CA said in a statement. "The public ticket allocation for the SCG ODI and Oval T20I was exhausted four months before the match, highlighting the huge demand for these matches, while the MCG T20I and Gabba T20I are also proving popular.*—PTI*

PHOTO: X

SKY undergoes successful sports hernia surgery

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

India's T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav has undergone a successful surgery for a sports hernia in his lower right abdomen in Munich, Germany.PTI had reported last week that Suryakumar was suffering from a sports hernia in his right lower abdomen and will go under the knife if required. "Life Update: Underwent surgery for a sports hernia in the lower right abdomen. Grateful to share that after a smooth surgery, I'm already on the road to recovery. Can't wait to be back," the 34-year-old batter wrote on his social media handle on Wednesday.*—PTI*

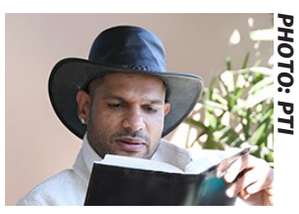


PHOTO: PTI

Dhawan debuts as author, pens memoir on sports

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

Swashbuckling former opening batsman Shikhar Dhawan has come out with his memoir in which he bares it all from his relationships to friendships, to all the controversies surrounding him, be it off or on the field. "Cricket gave me purpose, but it was the journey with the highs, the falls and the quiet moments that truly shaped me as a man I am today. This is me sharing that journey from the heart - raw, honest and unfiltered," Dhawan said about his book "The One: Cricket, My Life and More".*—PTI*

Ashwin asks Pant to do away with wild celebration

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

India should focus on extending their batting time, and Rishabh Pant must convert his hundreds into double centuries against an "average" England attack in the ongoing Test series, said senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin in his detailed post-mortem of the team's five-wicket loss in the lung-opener at Leeds.

"...I will say one thing don't panic and change drastically. India could and might level the series in the next Test.

But if we don't understand the tactics England are using, this series could very well go away from us quickly."

Ashwin stressed that the game slipped out of India's hands the moment they were bowled out early on the fourth day.

"When you didn't extend your batting into Day 5, the game was over.

This England team has openly advertised that they will go for the target, whatever the target may be. So as a batting lineup, we've to keep in mind that we have to give them less time but give a bigger target," he explained.

"If you want to set a target, you will have to keep a minimum of 400–450.

I would say 450 with as little time as possible is the best way to win a Test match in England at this point. If the wicket is such."

lauding the twin centuries by Pant, Ashwin said, comparing him to Mahendra Singh Dhoni was not appropriate, as the latter never batted at the reasonably high No. 5 position.

"... Rishabh Pant should be compared with the likes of Virat Kohli...He is a mainstream batter. Because he has so much time...," he said.

Ashwin compared Pant's ability to pick a delivery with Pakistani great Inzamam-ul-Haq.

"...some of these special batters have that knack of picking the ball early. They pick the line quickly, pick the length quickly, and they get into lovely positions.

Rishabh Pant is one of those rare players who has got that special skill," he said. *—PTI*

Ashwin wants Rishabh Pant to stop doing the famous front flip celebration after reaching a milestone PHOTO: PTI

ICC introduces stop clock in new WTC cycle

The warning count will be reset after every 80 overs

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has introduced a stop clock in Test matches, with the rule coming into effect with the beginning of the 2025-27 World Test Championship (WTC) cycle.

According to the rule, the fielding team has to start the next over within a minute of the previous one ending. If the rule is flouted, the fielding team will be given two warnings. Starting with the third offence, the batting side will be awarded five runs every time the rule is violated. The warning count will be reset after every 80 overs.

The stop clock rule has already been in effect in One-Day Internationals and T20Is involving Full Members since 1 June, 2024.

Saliva and changing the ball

In other updates to the playing conditions, it is no longer necessary for the umpires to change the ball once saliva is found on it, even though the ban on the use of saliva is still in force. The rule has been tweaked to counter a scenario where the bowling team, trying to get the ball changed, deliberately applies saliva on the ball.

Default decision is 'out' for secondary review

In the case of a secondary review after an 'out' decision by the on-field umpire, the default decision for the subsequent mode of dismissal will be 'out'.

Scenario

A batter reviews after he/she has been adjudged caught behind by the on-field umpire. UltraEdge shows that there was no bat involved, but the ball was in contact with the batter's pads.

Chronology in combined review

In another change relating to DRS, the TV umpire will now check a combined review (invoked by both umpire and player) in chronological order.

Catch off a no-ball

In the event of the on-field umpires discussing whether a catch has been taken cleanly, and the TV umpire subsequently informing them of a no-ball, the fairness of the catch will still be checked. Until now, a no-ball would rule out the need to check the fairness of the catch

Deliberate short run

While the five-run penalty for deliberately stealing an extra run (short run) remains in place, the updated rules mandate that the fielding team can decide which batter it wants on strike in such an event.

Trial for the new player replacement rule

The ICC has also suggested that member Boards trial a rule about replacement players in their domestic First-Class tournaments. The rule involves allowing a team to field a like-for-like replacement for a player who has suffered 'serious external injury'. *—PTI*

PV SINDHU'S CHALLENGE

'Working on patience to cope with changing women's game'

BENGALURU, 26 JUNE

Blistering aggression has given way to stamina-testing rallies in women's singles badminton, says ace Indian shuttler PV Sindhu, who is reinventing her game to keep pace with the evolving tempo while navigating a challenging lean phase. This year has been far from ideal for the two-time Olympic medallist. She has endured four first-round exits and three second-round losses, with a lone quarterfinal appearance at the India Open in January being a rare bright spot."The women's singles competition has completely changed.

Initially, it was more of attack and fast rallies; it has become much more defensive with long rallies and long matches," Sindhu told a select group of reporters at the Sports Authority of India Centre here."We have been working on that, especially in terms of being more patient to continue that rally and keep the shuttle in the court for a longer period.

We are working on how patient I need to be to maintain the rally, let's say 30 strokes or 40 strokes."I need to keep a check on my physical fitness, endurance. Because I need to withstand the court for a very long period. So, that way we have been working on these changes, and it's good that Irwansyah has come and is training me."One of India's most decorated athletes, Sindhu has a glittering CV comprising five world championship medals, including a gold, an Olympic silver and bronze. *—PTI*

KREJCIKOVA WITHDRAWS FROM EASTBOURNE

PARIS, 26 JUNE

Wimbledon champion Barbora Krejcikova has suffered an injury scare after being forced to withdraw from the Eastbourne tournament on Thursday because of a thigh issue.

The Czech player had reached the quarterfinals at Devonshire Park after saving match points in victories over British players Harriet Dart and Jodie Burrage.

"I'm very sorry to have to withdraw from my QF today in Eastbourne as I'm having some soreness in my right thigh," the 29-year-old Krejcikova said on social media.

"I've truly enjoyed my time

down here the past week and loved being back on the grass."

Krejcikova looked to be moving okay against Burrage, but with the defence of her Wimbledon crown beginning on Tuesday, she has taken the decision to fully recover.

Her withdrawal means French qualifier Varvara Gracheva is in the semifinals.

Draper ready for Wimbledon spotlight as great British hope

For a brief two weeks every year, the British public becomes hooked on tennis, desperately seeking a home player to cheer to sporting glory on the fabled lawns of Wimbledon, and this year the spotlight falls on Jack Draper.

For decades, it was a cause for hysteria if a British player survived to the second week of the singles. Then came Tim Henman's multiple journeys to the semifinals before Andy Murray became a national hero by ending a 77-year wait for a men's champion by winning the title in 2013, before repeating the feat three years later. *—PTI*

Mbappe files harassment complaint against PSG

DUBAI, 26 JUNE

Kylian Mbappe has accused Paris Saint-Germain of moral harassment in a legal filing, the Paris prosecutor's office confirmed on Thursday. The Real Madrid star is at odds with his former club, arguing PSG owes him 55 million euros ($61 million) in unpaid wages.

Mbappe is also unhappy with the way he was treated by the Ligue 1 club when the France captain was sidelined before the 2023-24 season, following his decision not to extend his club contract. The prosecutor's office said Mbappe is "denouncing the 'lofting' he claimed to have been subjected to at PSG." The word lofting is used in France to describe a practice that involves isolating a player from the main squad for sporting, administrative, or disciplinary reasons.— *PTI*

India wins all three titles in Asian Squash Doubles C'ships

KUALA LUMPUR, 26 JUNE

ZIn a remarkable achievement, India swept all three titles -- men's, women's, and mixed events -- in the second Asian Squash Doubles Championships after beating their respective rivals in the finals here on Thursday.The top-seeded men's pair of Abhay Singh and Velavan Senthilkumar lost the first set but made a comeback to beat their Pakistani opponents, Noor Zaman and Nasir Iqbal, 2-1 (9-11, 11-5, 11-5) in the summit clash that lasted 88 minutes.The Indian duo had reached the final after beating the Hong Kong pair of Chi Him Wong and Ming Hong Tang in the semifinals.In the women's doubles final, second seeds Joshana Chinappa and Anahat Singh also rallied from a set down to win 2-1 (8-11, 11-9, 11-10) against Malaysia's Ainaa Amani and Xin Ying Yee in a 35-minute final. *—PTI*

Cristiano Ronaldo signs new deal with Al Nassr

ABU DHABI, 26 JUNE

Cristiano Ronaldo has signed a two-year contract extension with Al Nassr, the Saudi Pro League side said on Thursday, which will keep the Portugal forward at the club past his 42nd birthday.

Ronaldo, who joined Al Nassr in 2022 after leaving Manchester United to become a free agent, has scored 93 goals in 105 appearances for them in all competitions.

At the age of 40, Ronaldo's estimated total earnings are around $275 million.

He has shown few signs of slowing down, with the forward leading Portugal to a second UEFA Nations League title this month when they beat neighbours Spain in the final.

Ronaldo is also eyeing the 1,000-goal milestone in his career. He has scored 794 goals in club football and 138 for Portugal to take his tally to 932. *—PTI*

Nissanka 146*, Chandimal 93 put Sri Lanka in control

COLOMBO, 26 JUNE

On a surface that Bangladesh's batters had laboured on a day earlier, Sri Lanka's batters made hay, as a 194-run second-wicket stand between Pathum Nissanka and Dinesh Chandimal took the hosts to a 43-run lead at stumps on day two.

At the close, nightwatcher Prabath Jayasuriya was in the middle to keep Nissanka - unbeaten on 146 - company, as light began to fade quickly. Jayasuriya had survived a few nervy moments, including a lbw review late, but Sri Lanka went home the happier of the two sides. Chandimal fell 93 late in the final session. *—PTI*

Seales, Shamar scythe through Australia on Day 1

BRIDGETOWN, 26 JUNE

Jayden Seales and Shamar Joseph shared nine wickets on the opening day in Barbados to increase the pressure on Australia's faltering batting line-up. Still, the visitors' quicks struck back to suggest another Test match that could unfold in fast forward on a surface that offered assistance for the seamers.

Australia's reshaped top order slipped to 22 for 3 against the new ball before Usman Khawaja, who was dropped twice on 6 and 45, and Travis Head added 89 as they threatened to take control. However, Khawaja's dismissal to Shamar Joseph sparked a collapse of 7 for 69, which included Head for 59 after he'd been

controversially reprieved by the third umpire who ruled a catch hadn't carried to wicket-keeper Shai Hope.

Australia's 180 was their lowest total in the West Indies, having chosen to bat first, and their lowest total in any format since 1995 in Trinidad. West Indies 57 for 4 (King 23*, Starc 2-35) trail Australia 180 (Head 59, Seales 5-60, S Joseph 4-46) by 123 runs *—PTI*

AUSTRIAN GRAND PRIX

Verstappen hopeful upgrades will boost title defence

DUBAI, 26 JUNE

Max Verstappen leads Red Bull into their home Austrian Grand Prix this weekend, hoping a major upgrades package can boost his title defence before it is too late.

The four-time world champion, who still needs to avoid any on-track problems that could lead to a mandatory race ban, has won four times at the high-speed Red Bull Ring circuit in the Styrian Alps and will be backed by his 'orange army' of fans. But he knows that combination may not be enough.

McLaren's championship-leading duo, Oscar Piastri and Lando Norris, who collided in Canada, are hoping to return to form after that rare off-day in a forecasted heatwave on a circuit expected to suit their car. Last year's winner, George Russell of Mercedes, who took advantage of McLaren's struggles in Montreal to win with aplomb ahead of Verstappen, will arrive with momentum and optimism, if wary of the heat.

"We are getting an update for Austria, which will be refined for Silverstone," Red Bull's consultant Helmut Marko told Austria's Kleine Zeitung. "But if that doesn't work, then it will be difficult for the championships if it is not difficult enough already."

Piastri says he and Norris remain free to race for the F1 title

Oscar Piastri says he and McLaren teammate Lando Norris are "still free to race" for the Formula 1 title after their collision at the Canadian Grand Prix.

Norris apologized after clipping Piastri's car and hitting the wall in Canada 11 days ago. The incident ended Norris's race, but Piastri finished fourth to extend his standings lead to 22 points over Norris.

Speaking on Thursday ahead of the Austrian Grand Prix, Piastri dismissed suggestions that the incident might prompt a rethink of McLaren's in-house "papaya rules" for battles between its drivers, or even that a time might be near when McLaren might favor Piastri over Norris. *—PTI*

BAI names 19-member team for Badminton AJC

NEW DELHI, 26 JUNE

The fast-rising Tanvi Sharma was on Thursday named in India's 19-member squad for the Badminton Asian Junior Championships (team and individual) to be held in Solo, Indonesia, from 18 to 27 July.

Tanvi won a gold medal in the Badminton Asia women's team championship. Junior world No. 1 men's doubles pair of Bhargava Ram Arigela and Viswa Tej Gibburu will also be critical to India's chances in the event.

The team competitions are scheduled from July 18–22, while the individual events will be held from 23–27 July. The team event will be played in a relay format, with the first side to reach 110 points declared the winner. It will begin with a group stage, followed by knockout rounds, with the top two teams from each group advancing. The full squad will report to a national preparatory camp at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati from July 4 to 15. The NCE Guwahati will also host the BWF Junior World Championships later this year. *—PTI*